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A  
VINDICATION  
Of the Protestant Ministers  
MISSION:

Wherein is proved,

Both from Scripture and Reason, and the Practice of the Primitive Churches, That the Christian People have sufficient Authority from Christ to Chuse their own Ministers; and that no Man, or Set of Men, have any Authority from Christ to Call, Constitute, and Impose Ministers on them, without their Previous Knowledge and Consent.

A N D

That the Pretence of an Uninterrupted Succession of Priestly Authority derived from the Apostles in a direct Line thro the Church of *Rome*, is a mere Juggle, and a Piece of Popish Priest-craft to awe the Vulgar, to make and keep them Bigots to themselves.

B E I N G A

SERMON preach'd at *Taunton*,  
T O

An A S S E M B L Y of Protestant  
Divines, *June 7. 1720.*

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By JOHN DAVISSEON. *t*

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ANNALS  
OF THE  
MISSION







## COLOS. iv. 17.

*And say to Archippus, take heed to the Ministry which thou hast receiv'd of the Lord, that thou fulfil it.*

**T**HE Excellency of any Institution as a Means, is chiefly manifested by the End that it's appointed to attain, and the Aptitude it hath in itself to gain the End proposed: Both these discover the Excellency of the Christian Ministry; an Institution which has the most glorious End, and is the most adapted to attain that End.

No greater End by human Reason can be thought on, than the Manifestation of the glorious Perfections of the divine Being, in the eternal Salvation of the Souls of Men: Nor can the Wisdom of Men or Angels contrive a Mean so wisely adapted to gain that End, as the Christian Ministry is.

We all know that Man was created by the Lord as perfect as was necessary to render him truly happy; he was endued with Powers and Faculties

to make him capable to serve and enjoy his Creator, in which consisted his chiefest Happiness. The great Lord of the Universe, as his absolute and despotick Sovereign; gave him a large Possession; he made him Sub-Governour of this lower World; he put all terrene Creatures under his Authority; he gave him as ample and full a Commission, as his Viceroy, as any Creature could desire: But to let him know that he was but a Creature and dependant, and that he held all his large Dominion as a Fief of his universal Empire, the great God reserved a small Acknowledgment from Man, as his Vassal, which

Gen. ii. 16.  
17.

*was to be the Test of his Obedience: And the Lord God said unto Man, of every Tree in the Garden thou may'st freely eat, but of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil thou shalt not eat of it; for in the Day thou eatest of it, thou shalt surely die.*

Thus was Man made a little, and but a little, lower than the Angels, and crowned with Glory and Honour. But, alas! tho Man was thus dignify'd, he did not long abide in this Honour; tho God made him upright, he foolishly sought out many Inventions, to his own ruin, and the ruin of his Posterity: For in a little, a very little time, the Arch-Rebel, and Grand Enemy of God and Man, seeing Man in this State of Felicity, and reflecting on his own Happiness and Glory lost, envying his Creator's Glory, and Man's Happiness, resolves to seduce Man from his dutiful Allegiance to his rightful Sovereign, and thereby at once rob God of his Glory, and divest Man of his Honour and Felicity. O fatal Day! The cursed Plot takes, Man is seduc'd, and his Happiness and Glory is lost; the Crown is fallen from his Head, the Scepter from his Hand, his glorious Robes of Innocency are lost; he has sinn'd, and dishonoured his God, is fallen under his just Dis-

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Displeasure, and subjected to his Wrath and Vengeance for ever. The Harbingers of threatened Death seized his Body; Fears, Terrors, and Amazement take hold of his guilty Soul; he can have no present Comfort, and for Futurity, there was nothing but a fearful looking for of Judgment and fiery Indignation of an incensed Sovereign. And as Man was thus fallen, in this sad and deplorable Condition, he had no Help in himself, nor could he hope for any from without.

But lo! on Man, in this wretched Estate, did the Lord, his provoked Sovereign, cast an eye of pity; and seeing there was no Salvation for sinful Man in any other, he resolves to make bare his own Arm, and bring about the Salvation of this his miserable and forlorn Creature. But the bright Rays of divine Holiness and Justice did so glare in the conscious Sinner's Face, that no Treaty could be set on foot between God and Man, without a Mediator; for Man's Guilt drove him still farther from God, as his God approached to him, tho with Terms of Reconciliation. Gen. iii. 8,

The infinitely wise and good God, commiserating Man's sad Estate, still pursuing his Thoughts of Love, to bring about his eternal Resolve, to magnify his Mercy on fallen Man, appoints a Mediator. Stupendous Grace! the Great God constitutes his own Son to mediate this unhappy Difference; and the Son, to make up the Breach, undertakes it.

Such was the Goodness of God, complying with Man's Infirmary, that lest the Rays of his Son's Divinity should amaze and terrify sinful Man, he appoints his Son to veil his Divinity with Humanity; *a Body he prepared him*, that he Heb. x. 5. might be *like to Man in every thing*, *Sin only excepted*. Heb. iv. And he accordingly took on him the Seed 15.  
of

Heb. ii. 15. of *Abraham*: for the Children being made Partakers  
Gal. iv. 4, of *Flesh and Blood*, he also himself took part of the same.

5. In the Fulness of Time he was made of a Woman, made  
under the Law, that he might redeem them who were  
Phil. ii. 6, under the Law. The Blessed Jesus, who was in the  
7. Form of God, and thought it no Robbery to be equal  
with God, made himself of no Reputation, and took  
upon him the Form of a Servant, and was made in  
the Likeness of Men.

Thus God was pleased to treat with Man by a  
Mediator in his own Nature; which was most a-  
greeable to Man in his present State, and, to be  
sure, the most likely to accomplish the great End  
at first proposed.

For no Creature below Man was capable to  
treat with him. And if we suppose them made  
capable by the Lord, either the Message would  
have been contemn'd for the Meanness of the Mes-  
senger, being so much below the Dignity of Man's  
Nature; or else the Message would have been sus-  
pected for the Messenger's sake: for Man having  
been already deceived by one of them, and ha-  
ving now experimentally known Evil as well as  
Good; (as a burnt Child dreads the Fire) he had  
good reason to be cautious of bringing himself  
into further trouble.

The Creatures above Man, the holy Angels,  
tho we may judge them capable, yet they were  
so much above Man, that their Appearance  
would rather frighten and terrify guilty Man,  
and make him keep his distance, than induce him,  
with any Confidence, to approach them, and en-  
ter into a Treaty with them, fearing lest they  
should come as Executioners of the righteous  
Sentence of God upon him for his Sin. The E-  
vent of the Experiment once tried, sufficiently  
shews us how unmeet the Ministrations of Angels  
was to conciliate a Friendship between God and  
Man;



Man; for the Author to the *Hebrews* says, *Moses* Heb. xii. himself did exceedingly fear and quake at their Mi-<sup>21.</sup>nistrations on Mount Sinai. And if we suppose them to be embodied, or to assume human Shape, as we know they can, how could Man be sure that he was treating with a good Angel, when the Devil can do the same thing, and transform himself into an Angel of Light?

Thus to prevent all Jealousies, and to satisfy Man that his God was sincere, and to induce him to listen to Terms of Reconciliation, he sent him Overtures of Peace by a Mediator most likely to prevail with him; a Mediator who had a *Fellow-Feeling* with him in his *Infirmities*, and whom, being truly Man, as himself, he had no reason to suspect, or be frightened at his Presence. This Apprehension of himself our Blessed Redeemer, when he was upon Earth, took special care to inculcate, and fix in the Minds of his Disciples, viz. That he was really Man. His Miracles and Works of Wonder astonish'd many, and gave occasion to some to think otherwise: therefore, that his Ministry might not be suspected, he often called himself *the Son of Man*; and asked his Disciples, *Whom do Men say that I the Son of Man am?* And<sup>Mat. xvi. 13.</sup> after his Resurrection, when he appeared to his Disciples, before his Ascension, he took care to remove this Misapprehension of him: He stood in the midst of them, and they being surprized and affrightened at his sudden Appearance, concluding that he had been a Spirit; *Why are ye trou-* Luke xxiv. bled, says he, *and why do Thoughts arise in your* 38, 39. *Hearts? Behold my Hands and my Feet, that it is I myself; handle me, and see; for a Spirit hath not Flesh and Bones, as ye see me have.*

When our Lord had finished the Work he had to do on Earth, and was about to go to his Father, that this his Mediation might be carried on suc-

successfully in his Absence, he gave Orders to his Disciples that they shou'd propagate his Gospel in all the Earth; and lest that which is every one's Business shou'd be neglected by all, he ordain'd that some in particular shou'd attend this as their peculiar Work. But lest those who were best qualify'd for this Work, shou'd, thro Fear or Temptation, avoid it; and others who were not qualify'd, thro Pride or Ambition shou'd intrude themselves; he appointed that those who were to minister in his Name shou'd be chosen by the rest, by their common Suffrage, and set apart from all Civil and Worldly Affairs to comfort and establish those who already believ'd, and to call and invite all Sinners to come and participate of the Grace of God with them. And for the Encouragement of those who shou'd be thus set apart for the Ministry, our Blessed Lord ordain'd that all the rest of his Followers shou'd communicate of their Temporals, and honourably supply those who were to live of the Gospel; that they might give themselves wholly to the Work of the Ministry, and not be incumber'd with the Affairs of this World, so very inconsistent therewith. And lest Temptations and Tryals, real Dangers or Difficulties, shou'd discourage and deter them from this Work, which they must expect to meet with in the Way of their Duty; our merciful God and Redeemer hath promised *to be present with them* himself, and that his Spirit shall influence and guide them in the Work which they are called to: yea, he hath besides assur'd them, that if they are diligent and faithful in his Work, he will reward all their faithful Services with a Crown of Glory. But foreseeing that some, notwithstanding all this, might prove negligent and remiss in their Work, he not only warns and threatens them himself; but orders the

the Saints and faithful Believers in him, by whom they were chosen, and whom they served, to warn and admonish, and exhort them to their Duty, that the great End of their Ministry might be answer'd. This brings me to the Words first read : *Say to Archippus, &c.* These Words carry in them an Injunction to a great and necessary Duty. Whether *Archippus* was that Man's proper Name, or the Name of his Office, is not certain, nor is it very material whether we determine it or not : it was a Name whereby he was well known at *Colosse* ; according to its Composition, in the Original, it signifies *Princeps, vel Magister equorum*, i. e. the *Governour, or Master of the Horse* ; which is an eminent Post among great Men, and in Princes Courts. What this Man was, or whatever his Employment was in civil Affairs, concerns us not. We are to consider him in the Relation he stood in to the Church at *Colosse* ; and to enquire what was his Ministry, or Service there. Some think that he was by Office a Deacon in that Church ; and the Reason they give for this their Opinion, is, because the Word *διακονία*, here render'd *Ministry*, properly signifies that Office. But this Reason I conceive is too weak to restrain it to that Office only ; because we find this Word *διακονία*, apply'd to the Ministry of the Word, and that not only to the ordinary, but the extraordinary Ministry ; to the Ministry of the Apostles. The Office of Deacons, the Ministration of Bread to the Poor, is properly, but not only signify'd by it ; as is plain in *Acts vi.* In *ver. 1.* the daily Ministration is express'd by *διακονία* but in *ver. 4.* the Ministry of the Word, and that by the Apostles, is express'd by it : *We, i. e. we Apostles will give ourselves to Prayer, and to the Ministry of the Word, διακονία.* So the Apostle Paul, *I am an Apostle of Rom. xi. the Gentiles, I magnify mine Office, διακονία.* So 13.

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again,

2 Cor. iv. again, *Seeing we have receiv'd this Ministry,*  
 1. *Slavoy.* And in another Place; *For the perfecting*  
 Ephes. iv. *the Saints, for the Work of the Ministry, Slavoyas.*  
 12. In this Sense I think we are to understand it here  
 of *Archippus*; for in this Epistle, Chap. i. Ver. 7.  
 the Apostle calls *Epaphras*, of whose Office there  
 is no doubt, *Slavoy*, Minister; and in ver. 23. he  
 calls himself *Slavoy*, Minister: And that this *Ar-*  
*chippus* was a Minister of the Word is very plain,  
 I conceive, from our Apostle's Epistle to *Philemon*,  
 ver. 2. *To Apphia, and Archippus our Fellow-Soldier.*  
 He styles him his *Fellow-Soldier*, I apprehend, from  
 his being engaged in the same Work of the Gospel  
 with himself. So that from the Whole we may  
 conclude, that he was a Minister of the Word,  
 and not a Deacon only. But whether he was  
 Pastor of the Church at *Colosse*, in the room of  
*Epaphras*, as some conjecture, or only a Teacher  
 therein, it does not appear. But let it be either  
 of them, it seems he was not so diligent in his  
 Office, as he shou'd have been, *to fulfil his Ministry*  
*which he had receiv'd of the Lord.* He was dila-  
 tory, slothful, and remiss in the Discharge of his  
 Duty: Therefore they were to say to Archippus,  
*take heed, &c.* Here is not only the Man's Fault  
 imply'd, but here is the Remedy to be apply'd for  
 the Cure, i. e. Admonition to a more diligent  
 Discharge of his Duty for the time to come. Ob-  
 serve, they were not to revile him, and load him  
 with Reproaches for his Neglect of his Duty:  
 Churches and Members shou'd not presently, as  
 soon as they espy a Fault in their Ministers, go  
 and blazon it abroad, and publish it to the  
 World; no, they are to say to him, not of him;  
 to his face, faithfully and in love; not behind his  
 back, to blast his Reputation, and to hinder the  
 Success of his Ministry. 2. Observe, *Archippus*  
 was to be admonished, not to be cast out and for-  
 faken,



faken. Some People, to their Shame may it be spoken, no sooner have espy'd a Fault in their Ministers, but are for ejecting them, and that not only from their Offices, but from their Communion and Affections too: These are for depriving them *ab officio & beneficio* at once; forgetting that Admonition shou'd go before Dismission. All Means must be try'd to recover a negligent Minister, as well as an offending Member. But such Persons are usually so violent, that they will not make any Allowance for human, unavoidable human Infirmities, in their Ministers; not considering that their Ministers are Men of the like Passions with themselves, having the same original Corruption, being liable to the same Temptations, and compassed about with the same Snares in the World; and have oftentimes greater Temptations and Difficulties to encounter, than other Men and common Believers. 'Tis rational to expect, that the grand Adversary the Devil will assault them with greater Violence, or with more serpentine Craft than other Men; knowing, that if he can prevail against a Minister of Christ, especially such an one, as we may suppose this *Archippus* to be; who was of some Note, famous for his civil Employ, as being Master of the Horse to some great Man; he shall do more Mischief to the Interest of Christ, than if he foiled many Christians of lower Degree. But I am not here, my Brethren, pleading to excuse, or cover the notorious Crimes of Ministers; no, God knows my Heart; but only to shew how unreasonably they act toward their Ministers, who presently take offence at their Failings, alienate their Affections, withdraw their Assistance, forsake their Ministry, and load 'em with Reproaches far beyond the just Demerit of their Crimes, if any, not using the Means which Christ hath ordain'd

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for their Recovery, nor making any Allowance for the Infirmities of fallen human Nature; as tho their Ministers alone were to be perfect in this imperfect State. *Say to Archippus, take heed.* The Duty here is plain: But who are to discharge it? Whose Duty is it to *Say to Archippus, take heed*? If we look into *Chap. i. Ver. 2.* we shall be satisfy'd whose Duty it was. They were, you see, *the Saints and faithful Brethren in Christ at Colosse, i. e. the Church of Christ at Colosse*, the whole Body of Believers in Christ, whose Minister this *Archippus* was. To them it is given in charge, *Say to Archippus, take heed, &c.* Here is also the Motive included, which they were to make use of to move him to his Duty; *i. e. His Ministry was not his own, he had receiv'd it*; and that not for himself, his own Profit or Honour, but in trust for the Glory of God, and the Advancement of the Kingdom of Christ. All the Ministries of the Gospel-Ministers are the Lord's: Ministers are Servants and Stewards of the Mysteries of the Gospel, and they are all accountable to the Lord for what Charge they receive of, or in the Lord. *From, of, or in the Lord* may be meant either for the Lord's Use, or in the Name of the Lord; or it may denote that Authority by which Ministers of the Gospel act, *i. e. by the Authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, as King of his Church.* The Words thus explain'd afford us these three Propositions, *viz.*

*Ἐν κυρίῳ.*

*First,* That Ministers of the Gospel have no Authority to preach the Gospel, or to minister in holy Things, but *what they receive in, of, or from the Lord.*

*Secondly,* That Ministers who have receiv'd Authority to preach and minister in holy Things, may grow remiss in the Discharge of their Duty, and may need *Admonition.*

*Thirdly,*

*Thirdly*, That when any Minister is remiss in his Office, or negligent in the Discharge of his Duty, the Church, or Faithful in Christ, whose Minister he is, shou'd faithfully admonish him, and excite him to *take heed, and to fulfil that Ministry which he hath receiv'd of the Lord*. I purpose to speak somewhat to each of these in their Order.

*First*, That Ministers of the Gospel have no Authority to preach the Gospel, or to minister in holy Things, but what they have receiv'd *in, of, or from the Lord*. Two Things in this Proposition are generally agreed to by Christians of all Denominations. 1. That no Man hath this Honour in, or of himself, as a Man or a Christian, *but he who is called of God, as was Aaron*. 2. That all Authority to preach the Gospel must come *from the Lord*.

But the great Thing that hath been, and still is in dispute, is, by whom this Authority is now convey'd to Men to preach the Gospel of Christ: For none, since the Apostles, pretend to an immediate Call from God in ordinary to preach the Gospel, unless a few enthusiastical, or sick-brain'd Persons, whose pretended Miracles, or prophetick Raptures, have, in a little time, unveil'd the Cheat, and discover'd the Imposture: But all derive it from mediate Hands. Some lay claim to this Authority, as devolv'd down to them in an uninterrupted Line of Succession of Men Episcopally ordain'd from the very Apostles to this Day. And these Men are so very confident of the Truth of their Mission, or at least pretend so to be, that they damn the Mission of all other Ministers, who pretend not to the same: For they say, that the only Power to call and constitute Ministers is lodg'd in the Bishops, and that the Bishops have this

this Power independent of any Power under Heaven. Others say, that this Authority is lodg'd with the Church, or Christian People; *the Saints and Faithful in Christ* in every Nation, where the pure Word and Doctrine of Christ is believ'd and receiv'd. They think that the Succession of pure Doctrine with any People is enough to give Right to them, united together by mutual Covenant, to maintain the Cause of God in the World, to call and constitute whom they shall judge qualify'd and meet to minister among them in holy Things. They judge that those call'd and set apart by such a Church or Congregation of Faithful in Christ, receive a valid Mission to preach the Gospel of Christ. But tho these believe, that the Power of Calling and Constituting Ministees is lodg'd in the Church, or Body of the Faithful in Christ, and not in the Clergy alone; yet they don't exclude the Elders from a Share therein. They say, that in conferring Orders, the Elders, if any, ought to preside; and as Eyes to the People they ought to direct in this their Choice: But they deny that they have the sole and only Authority under Heaven vested in them to call and constitute Ministers, independent of the Church, or Company of Faithful in Christ, united together to uphold the publick Worship of God, for the Glory of God, and for the Good of their own Souls, and the Souls of others: For they don't suppose, that in that solemn Action of Ordination, or of Laying on of the Hands of the Presbyters or Bishops, that the Bishops or Presbyters do confer any more Office-Power on them whom they ordain, than what they had received before by the Call and Suffrage of the Saints and Faithful in Christ; but that that solemn Act of Laying on of the Hands of the Bishops and Presbyters in Ordination, like the Coronation of a King, is only



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only a publick and solemn Declaration, for the Honour of the Person ordain'd, and for the Satisfaction of the World, that the Person ordain'd is by the faithful People judg'd qualify'd, and therefore called and constituted a Minister of the Gospel of Christ. For as the Coronation of a King adds no more Power or Authority than what the King had before he was crown'd; so the Laying on of the Hands of the Bishops and Presbyters in Ordination confers on the Persons ordain'd no new Power or Authority to preach or minister in holy Things: For these know nothing of that indelible Character, or super-natural Power, which the Popish Priests dream of, convey'd by Laying on of Hands in Ordination.

This last Opinion seems to me most worthy of our Approbation; not only as it is most agreeable to the true Protestant Principle, and on which the whole Protestant Reformation was built; but as most consonant to the Holy Scriptures. Now, because this true Protestant Principle hath not only been oppugn'd by the *Romanists* ever since the glorious Reformation begun in *Germany*, and all Protestant Ministers Mission by them declar'd invalid; but because of late Days, and even in our own Days, there are a Set of Gentlemen, who pretend to receive their Mission from Bishops, who derive their Episcopal Authority from the Apostles in a direct Line of uninterrupted Succession of Bishops; who are pleas'd to clamour, not only at Dissenters Mission here at home, as Schismatics; but render all Protestant Ministers Mission abroad invalid, for want of their uninterrupted Episcopal Authority; and hereupon declare all our Administrations null and void; I hope you'll excuse it, if I see it necessary in such an Assembly as this, and in such a Day, to assert and vindicate the Mission which we have received from the

the faithful Brethren in Christ to preach the Gospel, and to minister in holy Things, not only as a true Protestant, but a true Christian Mission; and that we need no other Authority to render all our Administrations valid.

I shall lay down this Proposition as Truth, which I hope to make good, *viz.* That a Company of Saints or faithful Brethren in Christ, joined together by free and mutual Covenant to promote the Glory of God, and the mutual Advantage of each others Souls, and the Benefit of the Souls of others, in the publick Worship of God, have sufficient Authority from Christ to chuse and constitute their own Ministers; and that no Man, or Set of Men in this World, have Power from Christ to impose any Minister on them without their previous Consent. Such a Company of Saints and Faithful in Christ, so and for those forementioned Ends united, I take to be a visible Church of Christ; and as such I shall consider them. I shall, 1. Endeavour to prove the Truth. 2. I shall endeavour to solve the great and mighty Objection raised against it.

1. I am to prove the Truth. Tho it may seem to you needless to go about to prove what stands as clear as any first Principle in Philosophy, or as a Mathematical Demonstration; yet considering that it is opposed, and that some may not be so well acquainted with the solid Arguments by which it is made manifest, I presume on your Patience whilst I lay open the Foundation on which this great and important Truth doth rest. This,

(1.) Stands to Reason: 'Tis a rational Truth, that Reason pleads for; the very Light of Nature discovers it. For if we consider this Society of Christians as a Society, it is of the same Nature as all voluntary Societies. This only differs in the End of its Union from civil Societies: It has

has indeed a more noble End. Other Societies aim at their mutual Advantage in the Affairs of this Life; this unites for the Glory of God, to promote the Honour of Christ by enlarging his Kingdom, and for the Benefit of their own Souls, and the Good of others. Now, tho this must be allowed a nobler and more laudable End, as the Glory of God and the Good of Souls is to be prefer'd infinitely above the Glory of Kings, or temporal Felicity of Men in civil Societies; yet as a Society, they are the same. Now, it stands to Reason that every Society, to keep themselves from Confusion in the Management of their Affairs, must have some Government, that they may obtain the End proposed by their Union. Nothing seems to stand more consonant to Reason, than that this Society should agree, for Order's sake, that some particular Person, or Persons, should preside over the rest, to guide and direct in the Management of their Affairs. 'Tis rational to suppose, that the whole Society should have the Power of this Choice, and that the Majority should determine on whom the Lot falls. 'Tis to be supposed also, that the Persons chosen should act in the Name of the whole, and that they should be empowered so to do. Now, on whom shall these Persons depend for their Authority, but on those who elected them to preside over the whole? Who shall vest those Rulers or Officers with Power or Authority to act, but the Body or Society by whose Suffrage they are chosen, and in whose Names they are to act? Does it not stand to Reason, that these Officers should receive their Authority and Power to act, from the Society by whose Suffrage they are chosen to officiate? To me this seems very rational.

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But we are to remember, that this Society, tho they are voluntary in their Union, are yet under the Rule and Government of a despotick King; and in general, they must be subjected to his Laws, and governed by them in all their Affairs: They must have Authority from Christ for what they do; they must act by a Charter granted them by the King of Kings, to empower them to act, and to carry on their Affairs, so as to obtain their End. We willingly grant that 'tis so; and this Society of Christians declare they act by Christ's Laws in all their Affairs, especially in the Affair before us, *viz.* in calling and constituting their own Officers and Ministers. But before we produce this Charter, we will add to this rational Consideration, the End of the Gospel-Ministry. For what End is it

Eph. iv. 12. instituted? Is it not *for the Edification of the Church, or Body of Faithful in Christ, called Christ's Body?* Who are the best and fittest Judges of the Church's Edification? Are they not themselves? Not to allow Christian Societies a Capacity to judge of their own Edification, is not only to undervalue them as Men, but to render them, in their kind, worse than Brutes, who are capable of chusing what is good for them, and of rejecting what is hurtful to their Natures. Is it rational to think that those very Men, who in civil Societies are capable of managing the most arduous Affairs of civil Government, are no ways capable to chuse for themselves in those things which concern the Welfare of their Souls? No, especially when we consider that they have, as Believers in Christ, received of the Holy Spirit, by which spiritual Things are understood, *even the deep things of God*; for the

I Cor. ii. 10, 11, 12. Apostle tells us, that the *Spiritual Man*, i. e. the Believer, *judges all things.*

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To say that the Societies of Christians have not a Capacity to judge in spiritual Matters, is to speak not only against Reason and Experience, but against the holy Scripture; for the holy Scriptures suppose them to be capable, or else they would never be commanded to try, prove, and judge the Doctrines of their Teachers, and to hold fast what they found to be wholesome Doctrine, and to reject Error; nor would they be blamed for not doing this, or commended for doing it, if they were not deemed capable, or if it had not been their Duty so to do. But we find this frequent in the Scriptures: The Church of *Thessalonica* was commanded to *prove all things, and to hold fast that which is good.* <sup>1 Thes. v. 21.</sup> The Apostle *John* bids the Believers *try the Spirits whether they be of God;* and the Reason he gives, is, *because there were many false Prophets gone out in the World.* <sup>1 John iv. 1, 2.</sup> The Apostle *Jude* commands us to *contend earnestly for the Faith once deliver'd to the Saints.* <sup>Jude, ver. 2, 3.</sup> And are the Believers to contend for what they are not capable to make any judgment of? I hope not. The Church at *Ephesus* was commended for *trying the Doctrine of those who said they were Apostles, and were found Lyars.* <sup>Rev. ii. 2.</sup> The Faithful in *Christ at Smyrna* were blamed for not dealing with those who held the Doctrine of *Balaam*; and the Church at *Thyatira* was reprov'd for not ejecting the false Prophetess *Jezabel.* <sup>Ver. 14, 20.</sup> Thus from holy Scripture we see, that the Churches, in the Apostles Days, were deemed capable of judging what was for their Edification, and consequently they are still. And from hence we may conclude they are capable to chuse their own Ministers and Officers.

We may add to this, that Ministers are by Christ constituted as Servants to his Church and Spouse. All publick Ministries of Bishops and

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Teachers, are the Ministries of the Church, under her Head and Husband Christ Jesus. With whom is it rational to think, that our Blessed Redeemer shou'd leave the Power of Calling and Constituting Ministers for his Bride the Church? With her, his Spouse, to chuse and constitute her own Officers, at her own Pleasure, as she saw occasion; or with some of her Servants, to call and constitute what other Servants they please, and impose them on her without her Consent, or previous Knowledge? Sure 'tis hardly rational to think, that our Blessed Lord, when he went to Heaven, shou'd leave the sole and only Power of Calling and Constituting Officers and Ministers in the Church, to some Servants only, and none to his beloved Spouse: that he shou'd grant no Power to his Church to chuse her own Servants, is very hard to conceive. Thus I have shewn you, that 'tis rational that the Societies of Saints and faithful Brethren in Christ have Authority from Christ to chuse and constitute their own Officers.

(2.) I am further to manifest the same Thing by Scripture; and to produce the Charter wherein this Grant is made to the Churches of Christ: For when our Blessed Lord was about to depart, he made a Grant of the Power of the Keys to his Church and Spouse. *Then the same Day at Evening,*  
*Joh. xx. 19, 20, 21, being the first Day of the Week, when the Doors*  
*22, 23. were shut for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you; and when he had so said, he shew'd them his Hands and his Side: then were the Disciples glad when they saw the Lord. Then said Jesus unto them again, Peace be unto you; as the Father hath sent me, even so send I you: and when he had said thus, he breathed on them, and saith, receive ye the Holy Ghost; whosesoever Sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whosesoever Sins ye retain, they*

*they are retained.* 'Tis very plain, that this Grant was not to the twelve Apostles distinct from the rest of the Church; for here is no Distinction or Discrimination of Persons; but to the whole Body of the Disciples in general, for *Mary Magdalen* and others were present at the same time. And 'tis to be observ'd in our Saviour's Discourses, that when he intended any thing for his Apostles, distinct from the rest of his Disciples, he distinguished them by the Twelve. *Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve Disciples apart in the way, and said unto them, &c. And he took again the Twelve, and began to tell them, &c. And the Twelve were with him. And he called the twelve Disciples together, and gave them Power and Authority over all Devils, and to cure Diseases. When the Hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve Apostles with him. Then said Jesus unto the Twelve, will ye go also?* But here is no Distinction or Discrimination of Persons; therefore this Grant must be to the Disciples as such, or to the whole Body of Believers in Christ, the whole Church. And this will appear more plain, if we compare this with the Relation *Luke* gives of this Matter: *Then they, i. e. Cleopas and his Companion, who were at Emmaus, to whom Jesus had manifested himself, rose up the same Hour and went to Jerusalem, and found the Eleven gather'd together, and them that were with them, saying, the Lord is risen indeed, and hath appear'd to Simon --- And as they spake, Jesus stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you --- Behold my Hands and my Feet, it is I my self --- And ye are Witnesses of these Things.* Who were Witnesses of those Things? The twelve Apostles only? No, the whole Body of Disciples, the Seventy, and the rest. He goes on; *Behold, I send the Promise of the Father upon you; but tarry ye in Jerusalem until ye be endued with Power from on High.*

Math. xx.

17.

Mar. x. 32.

Luk. viii. 1.

and ix. 1.

Luk. xxiv.

33, &c.

*A Vindication of the*

In *Acts* i. where we have the Continuation of this Story, the Historian acquaints us, that according to this Order of their Lord and Master they did continue in *Jerusalem*, waiting for the Promise of the Father --- Then return'd they to *Jerusalem* ---

*&c.*

And when they were come in, they went up into an upper Room --- and continued in Prayer and Supplication --- And the Number of the Names together were about a hundred and twenty. In *Chap.* ii. *Ver.* 1, &c.

*Acts* ii. 1,

2, 3, 4.

Luke tells us, that when the Day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one Place; and suddenly there came a Sound from Heaven, as of a rushing mighty Wind, and it fill'd all the House where they were sitting; and there appear'd unto them Cloven Tongues, like as of Fire, and it sat upon each of them; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other Tongues, as the Spirit gave them Utterance. Thus they received the Promise of the Father, and were baptiz'd with the Holy Ghost, and were endued with Power from on High.

I think 'tis rational and clear from hence, that they who tarried at *Jerusalem* waiting for the Promise, and who actually received the Promise, were the very same to whom the Promise was made; but it is plain the whole Church, or Company of Faithful in Christ, were together and received the Promise; therefore it must be the whole Company of Disciples, and not the Eleven only, to whom this Promise was made.

They who were together with the Doors shut for fear of the Jews, to them our Saviour said, Peace be unto you; to them he said, *Whosoever Sins ye remit, they are remitted, &c.* To these same he said, *Ye are Witnesses of these Things, and I will send the Promise of the Father upon you; but tarry ye at Jerusalem until ye be endued with Power from on High.* Every one must see, that this Company of Disciples were not the Rulers or Apostles of the



the Church alone, the eleven Apostles distinct from the rest; but the whole Church or Company of faithful Believers in Christ. Besides, *Peter* afterwards tells us, that this Effusion of the Spirit was the fulfilling *Joel's* Prophecy, which must be to the whole Church, and not to a little, small, and select Number thereof; and to this Church the Lord is said to *add daily such as shou'd be saved*. Thus 'tis manifest, that they who received the Holy Ghost in fact, and were endued with Power from on High, as the Accomplishment of the Promise, were the same to whom the Promise was made; and that the whole Church received the Promise in fact, is too plain to be deny'd by any Man of Reason or Modesty. Now this Church being the only Christian Church in the World, I conclude, as this Church was multiply'd and extended by the Gospel, this Power or Authority devolv'd with the Gospel to every Church and Company of faithful Believers in Christ, and will remain with such to the World's End.

I am aware the Adversaries of this Truth will say, that the Power of the Keys was granted before to the Apostles distinct from the rest of the Disciples. If this was true, yet if our Saviour afterwards enlarged his Grant, and made it to the whole Church, it answers my Purpose; which is to shew, that the Church hath such Power granted to her, whereby she is authorized to chuse and constitute her own Officers or Ministers. But I deny any such Grant of the Power of the Keys to the Apostles distinct from the rest of his Disciples. Let us view the Words which are pretended to carry this Grant in them. *I say unto thee, thou art Peter, and upon this Rock will I build my Church, and the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it: And I give unto thee the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt* Matth. xvi. 18, 19.

*shalt bind on Earth shall be bound in Heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on Earth shall be loosed in Heaven.* This Grant of the Power of the Keys unto *Peter* can't, I apprehend, be meant of *Peter* personally; because then it will terminate on him personally, distinct from the rest, and so, of consequence, *Peter* must have the whole Power of the Keys, and not one of the rest of the twelve Apostles can have any Share in this Grant: But our Adversaries themselves will allow the rest of the twelve Apostles a Share with *Peter* in this Grant. It must then be understood as made to *Peter* representatively; and if we understand it thus, *Peter* in this must represent the twelve Apostles only, or the Disciples or Believers in Christ, in general. I conclude, that *Peter* in this represented the whole Body of Disciples, the Seventy, and the rest, as well as the eleven Apostles, for these following Reasons.

(1.) Because the Question ask'd by our Lord was of the whole Body of Disciples, or Believers in him. *Jesus asked his Disciples, Whom do Men say, that I the Son of Man am? They answer'd, some say thou art John Baptist, some Elias, or Jeremias, or some one of the Prophets. But whom do ye say I am? And Simon Peter said, thou art Christ the Son of the Living God.* It seems rational to conclude, that the Grant must be to the same whom our Blessed Lord addressed himself to in the Question.

(2.) Because *Peter's* Answer and Confession was equally the Faith and Confession of the whole Body of Disciples. *Thou art Christ the Son of the Living God:* And I see no Reason to divide the Grant from the Confession on which it is founded.

(3.) Because the Ground of the Blessedness is applicable to the whole Number of Disciples, and not to the Twelve only. *Blessed art thou, Simon*

Simon Bar-Jona ; *for Flesh and Blood hath not reveal'd this unto thee, but my Father which is in Heaven.* None can talk so wild, as to say this was reveal'd by the Father to *Peter*, and the other eleven Apostles only, and not to the Seventy, and the rest of the faithful Believers in Christ. Sure the rest of the Disciples and Followers of Christ, we may conclude, were taught of God, as well as the twelve Apostles.

(4.) Because there is no Reason antecedent or consequent to induce us to restrain our Saviour's Discourse to the Twelve only ; but on the contrary : *Then said Jesus to his Disciples, if any Man* Matth. xvi. *will come after me, let him deny himself, and take* 24. *up his Cross and follow me.* This can't be restrain'd to the Twelve only, I think, without manifest Injury to the sacred Text : And our Saviour's Discourse being to the same Persons, I conclude, 'tis plain that our Saviour, in the Grant of the Keys to *Peter*, gave the Grant to *Peter* representing the whole Body of faithful Believers in Christ. But,

(5.) Because I find the very same Grant in the same Terms and Latitude made to the Church Matth. xviii. 17, 18. in Words at length, which need no Comment to discover their Sense. Scripture we all allow to be the best Interpreter of Scripture, especially when one Place that may be dark, or seem dubious, is opened and expounded by one which is full and clear. If we look into the Text referr'd to, we shall see the former dark, controverted Place laid open, and clear'd of its Doubts.

In this Chapter our Blessed Lord is giving Directions to his Disciples how to behave in case of Offence ; and this concern'd the whole Body of his Disciples, and not the Twelve only. He commanded them not to give Offence one to another ; he lays before them the sad Consequence of giving  
D Offence ;

Offence; but, if thro Inadvertency, they shou'd give one another Offence, he directs them what Course to take in order for Reconciliation. (1.) Private Admonition: But if that wou'd not answer the End, (2.) They were to bring the Matter to the Church; and if he who had committed the Offence, continued insensible, or appear'd contumacious, and would not hear the Church, he was to be esteem'd as an Heathen Man, or as a Publican. *Verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on Earth, shall be bound in Heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on Earth, shall be loosed in Heaven.* Here we have the same thing in the same Terms and Latitude granted to the Church, which we had in the former Words granted to *Peter*. That this must be understood of the Christian Church, and not of the *Jewish* Sanhedrim, I apprehend will appear from the following Reasons.

1. Because our Blessed Lord is giving Directions to his Disciples how to behave in this Case after his Death, and not whilst he was with them. Whilst he was with them himself, no body can think that our Lord wou'd send his Disciples to the *Jewish* Sanhedrim, to reconcile their Differences amongst themselves. Much less can we think, that the faithful Believers in Christ, after their Lord's Death, were to appeal to their implacable Enemies the *Jews*, and their Council, to have their Grievances redress'd, which they might have cause to complain of from one another. Sure, Christians are not to apply themselves to either unbelieving *Jews* or *Gentiles*, to determine the particular Differences which may arise among themselves; but to a Judicature of their own, who act and judge according to the Laws and Statutes of Christ, their King and Sovereign.



2. Because in the next Verses our Saviour makes two Promises to the same Persons, which can no ways with any Consistency of Sense be apply'd to the *Jewish* Sanhedrim: *Again, says he, I Ver. 19, say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on Earth 20. as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in Heaven.* Two of whom? of the Sanhedrim? Nothing more wild can be spoken, to be sure. This Promise of granting what Two shall agree to ask, was to the same Persons to whom the Grant in the preceding Verse was made, and that must be the Church, or the whole Body of faithful Believers in Christ; for what any Two of these shall agree to ask in Faith, they shall receive. In the next Verse, he promises his Presence with two or three of these same Persons wheresoever they are gather'd together. It can't be rationally thought, that this Promise of Christ's Presence was made to those inveterate Enemies of our Lord, the *Jewish* Rulers. That our Lord shou'd say, where two or three of the *Jewish* Sanhedrim are gather'd together, there am I in the midst of them, is so very foreign from the Sense of our Lord's Words, that to me nothing seems more absurd and ridiculous.

There are some Christians who understand this Grant to be made to the Rulers and Guides of the Church, and not to the whole Church. To whose Opinion I oppose these Things.

(1.) That no where do we find the Church to mean the Rulers and Guides of the Church; nor do I see any apparent Necessity in this Place so to understand it: and to make Figures where there is no Necessity, is the way to corrupt, and not to expound the Word of God: And here can be no Necessity to understand by the Church only a few Persons, a select Number of the Church, her Rulers and Guides. They are, we readily

allow, as Members of the Church included, but not meant alone, exclusive of the whole Body, as tho they, and they alone, had this Grant of the Power of the Keys made to them. The only Necessity that I can see to make this Text speak this Sense, is, that it may give some Colour to the Opinion of some, and the Practice of others, who have wrested the Keys out of the Hands of the Church, and therefore find it necessary to call themselves the Church, lest the Christian People shou'd account them Usurpers, and claim the Power to themselves again. For here is no apparent Necessity from the Context, antecedent nor consequent, that will enforce that Sense.

(2.) Because of the Promises in the consequent Verses, as before ; which, I conceive, can't be restrain'd to the Rulers or Officers of the Church only. It wou'd be bad for Christians indeed, if these Promises were made only to the Clergy. We will then conclude, to whom our Lord made those Promises to hear the Prayers of two, and to be present with two or three, to them he made the Grant of Binding and Loosing : but any Man, but with half an Eye, not prejudiced by an Opinion, may see that the Promises must relate to the Church, or whole Body of the faithful Disciples and Believers in Christ, and not to the Rulers and Officers only. But that which I hope will make this more plain, and determine their Minds to the Sense I plead for, is,

(3.) Because we find, that this same Power which our Blessed Lord here granted of Binding and Loosing, was afterwards exerted and practis'd by the Churches, and that by the Apostles Direction and Advice. We will take it for granted, that the Apostle *Paul* very well knew with whom our Blessed Lord had lodg'd this Power of Binding and Loosing. Now, if we look over the Exhortations

tations and Directions which the Apostle sent to the Churches concerning this Matter, we shall quickly be convinc'd, that this Power was lodg'd in the Church, or with the Faithful in Christ, and not with the Clergy alone. The Apostle gave Direction to the Churches to bind their offending Members, and not to the Clergy; which shews where the Power was lodg'd. For, I conceive, if the sole Power of binding and loosing Offenders had been lodg'd with the Clergy alone, as some claim, the Apostle wou'd have exhorted them to have exerted this their Power: but instead of this, we have the reverse; he writes to the Churches, and not to the Officers only, to put this Power in execution. He sent to the Church at Rome so to do. *Now, I beseech you, Brethren,* Rom. xvi. says he, *mark them which cause Divisions and Offences, contrary to the Doctrine which ye have received, and avoid them.* To whom did the Apostle give this Advice? To the Clergy at Rome? Nothing more vain; unless we will say the Clergy were all that were at Rome, *beloved of God, and called to be Saints.* Chap. i. 7. But no body, I suppose, will thus say. The like Direction and Advice the same Apostle sent to Corinth, for them to bind or censure the incestuous Person. *It is reported,* says he, 1 Cor. v. 1. *that there is Fornication among you: among you; among whom? the Clergy only? No, among the Body of Believers.* What then? Why, says he, *In the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my Spirit with [or by] the Power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one to Satan, for the Destruction of the Flesh, &c.* Ver. 4. When ye are gathered together; Who? the Clergy? No, the Church or Faithful in Christ. We see here the Body of Believers in Corinth were exhorted to bind or eject the Fornicator, and that by the Power of the Lord Jesus Christ, which they had

1 Cor. v.  
7.

Ver. 9.

had receiv'd. What Power had they received but this of binding and loosing granted by Christ to his Church? He goes on, *Purge ye out the old Leaven, that ye may be a new Lump.* Who are to be a new Lump? The Clergy only? Nothing more foreign. Again, says he, *I wrote to you an Epistle not to company with Fornicators.* To whom did the Apostle write? To the Rulers only? or to the whole Church? See the first Chapter; *Paul, an Apostle of Jesus Christ, to the Church of God which is at Corinth, to them who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be Saints.* This is far from being the Clergy only. Hence it is clear, that the Apostle Paul gave Direction to the Church at Corinth, to exert the Power of binding, which Christ had granted to her: For if that Church had no such Power; these Directions and Exhortations had been in vain; for these Directions suppose a Power to be exerted antecedently received, which they were exhorted to exert. These Exhortations brought no new Power, but only excited that Power which was lodg'd in the Church before. The Apostle's Letter stirr'd them up to exercise that Power which they had received from Christ by this Grant under consideration. For, says he, *Do ye not judge them that are within? But them which are without, God judgeth. Therefore put away from among your selves that wicked Person.*

Ver. 12,  
13.

2 Cor. ii. 6,  
7, 8, 9.

Compare this with what the Apostle says to the same People in his second Letter, where he desires the Church at Corinth to loose this incestuous Person again, he being become penitent. *Sufficient to such a Man is this Punishment, or Censure, which was inflicted of many: so that contrariwise ye ought to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such an one should be swallow'd up with overmuch Sorrow. Therefore I beseech you that ye will confirm*



confirm your Love towards him. To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also. Now, as the Apostle in his former Letter exhorted them to bind the Man for his Sin, in this he desires and persuades them to loose him again, he being a Penitent, and the End of their Discipline being answer'd, viz. the recovering of the Sinner. Thus we see, as they had power to bind him, i. e. to eject and cast him out of their Society, or Communion; so they had power to loose him again, i. e. to forgive him being penitent, and receive him again into their Communion. Now, if all this don't prove the Power of binding and loosing lodg'd in the Church, or with the Society of Saints and Faithful in Christ; I am satisfied this Power is no where else to be found.

The very same thing the Apostle exhorts the Thessalonians to. Now we command you, Brethren,<sup>2 Thes. iii.</sup> in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that ye with-<sup>6.</sup> draw your selves from every Brother that walketh disorderly. If any Man, Officer or private Member, obey not our Word by this Epistle, note that Man, and have no Communion with him, that he may be ashamed. Is it not to dream, to say that this Command or Exhortation was given to the Clergy or Rulers only? I can't imagine that so wild a Fancy can be entertain'd by any Man of a sound Mind, who seriously considers this thing with any tolerable Application of Thought. Now, what is all this but exercising the Power in just and useful Discipline, which Christ had invested his faithful Disciples with. Thus I have shewn, by the Practice of the Churches in the Apostles Days, and that by the Direction and Advice of the Apostles themselves, that the Power of the Keys was lodg'd by Christ in his Church, and not with the Officers and Rulers only.

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To add, if possible, a little more Light to this clear Truth, we may consider the Practice of the Churches in the next Ages after the Apostolick Age; and this may serve as a Comment on the Apostles Practice. We read of nothing more common in Ecclesiastical History, especially in pure primitive Antiquity, than the strict Discipline the Churches of Christ used, particularly in censuring and casting out of their Assemblies defective and putrid Members, purging out the Leaven of Wickedness; and receiving again into their Communion those who by a Reformation of their Lives demonstrated the Truth and Sincerity of their Repentance. I am aware that our Adversaries will say, that the strict Discipline which was observ'd in the primitive Churches, was executed by the Bishops and Presbyters governing those Churches, &c. This I am very willing to grant, foreseeing no Detriment to the Cause I am pleading, by allowing that the Bishops and Presbyters of those Churches who had such Officers, did preside in those Acts of Discipline, and were as Eyes to the Churches, to direct them in the right Exercise of that Power wherewith they were invested by Christ; and that they were the Churches Mouths, to deliver their Sentences or Censures upon Offenders. And this executive Power we are willing they should still exercise, by the Grant of Christ and his Churches. But that the Clergy, the Bishops and Presbyters, did use this Discipline by any Power of their own, separate and independent of the Churches whom they served, we deny. This, indeed, the Adversaries of the Church's Power strongly affirm, but very weakly prove. If the Bishops and Presbyters in those pure Ages of Christianity did not censure, excommunicate, or absolve any publickly in their own Names, but  
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in the Name of the Church, and all their publick Censures were the Censures of the Church; then what they did therein was by the Authority of Christ lodg'd in the Church, according to that, *Whatsoever ye bind on Earth, shall be bound in Heaven, &c.* But so we read in primitive History, that 'twas the Churches did excommunicate and cast out of their Communion, and receive in again.

This I might manifest by a Cloud of Witnesses; but I will content my self with only one at present, and that shall be Bishop *Cyprian*, who flourish'd in the third Century; and I the rather fix on him, because he is admir'd by the Adversaries of this Truth. This Father, in his Epistle sent to *Cornelius*, Pastor of the Church at *Rome*, before the *Roman* Church was so corrupt as to become Antichristian, complained, and said, \* "O my  
" dear Brother, if you cou'd be present with  
" me, when these Men return from their Schism,  
" you wou'd wonder what Pains I take to persuade  
" our Brethren to be patient, that laying aside  
" their Grief of Mind, they wou'd consent to  
" the healing and receiving of those who were  
" sick. I can scarce persuade, yea, I extort a  
" Grant from my People, that such be received  
" to Communion." In another Place, says he,  
" † Neither is it lawful for Bishops, without the  
" Consent of their People, by their own private  
" Sentence do any thing." I think this must be granted, that if the Bishops and Presbyters in those Days cou'd not cast out, or receive in, without the Consent of the People, then what

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\* O si posses, frater Charissime, &c. *Epist.* 55. c. 17. p. 143.

† Nec Episcopis licebat sine consilio plebis sua privata sententia quicquam facere. *Epist.* 10.

they did in those Acts was by the Authority of Christ lodg'd in the Churches, and not by any separate and independent Power of their own. This then being the Practice of the Churches in the first Ages of Christianity, we may fairly conclude, that it was by this Grant of the Power of the Keys to the Church. And what was the Power of the Churches then by this Grant of Christ, is still, notwithstanding the Clergy in some Places have usurp'd this Power, and plead as tho they alone were vested with it: For tho the Clergy in some Places claim this Power, and in fact possess it, 'tis the Church's and People's Power of right by the Grant of Christ, as we have before prov'd. Now, if this Power of the Keys was granted by Christ to the Churches, then, as chusing and calling Ministers, and constituting Officers, is by all Sides allow'd to be one Act of the Power of the Keys, 'tis by the Grant of the Keys to the Church still in her Power to chuse and constitute her own Officers and Ministers.

Now to manifest this I shall further shew, that in calling and constituting Officers and Ministers, the Apostles always acted by and with the Consent or Suffrage of the Churches, and not by any separate and independent Power of their own. And if I prove this, I presume it will not be difficult to persuade you to believe, that no Bishop, not the most infallible one, hath now any such separate Power independent of the Churches, to call, constitute, and impose any Ministers or Officers on the Churches, without their previous Knowledge and Consent.

That the Apostles did not act in this Affair independent of the Churches, but by and with the Consent and Suffrage of the Churches, will appear by their Practice recorded by *Luke* in the



the History of their Actions, and in their Epistles.

The first Instance of any Choice of this Nature, is in *Acts* i. where we read of the Choice of *Matthias* to fill up the Traitor's Place. This Choice we find was made by the Suffrage of the whole Church, and not by the eleven Apostles alone; and that by Lot: *And they, i. e. the whole Church, gave forth their Lots, and the Lot fell on Matthias, and he was number'd with the eleven Apostles.* That this was by the Multitude, or whole Church, hear what *Luke*, the sacred Historian, says of it a few Verses before. *And in those Days, says he, stood up Peter in the midst of the Disciples, and said (the Number of the Names together were about an hundred and twenty) Men and Brethren, &c. Now, if the Apostles did not act in this Affair separate and independent of the Church in the Choice of an extraordinary Officer, one of their own Order, but thought the Consent and Suffrage of the Church necessary, we may fairly conclude, from the greater to the lesser, much less would they in chusing ordinary Ministers: Therefore if the Church had Right to vote in an extraordinary Minister, and that in the Presence of the whole College of Apostles, much more hath she Right to chuse her ordinary Officers now.* Acts i. 26.  
Ver. 15.

Again, in chusing Evangelists to travel with the Apostles, such as *Timothy, Titus, Lucas, Silas, &c.* who were a sort of extraordinary Ministers, or Officers, whose Business was to attend the Apostles in their Journeys, to be helpful to them in their Ministry, who were to go with their Messages on extraordinary Occasions; I say, in chusing such, we find the Apostles did not use their own proper, separate, apostolick Power independent of the Church's, but thought the

Suffrage of the Churches necessary. And therefore they are said to be chosen by the Churches, <sup>2 Cor. viii.</sup> as will appear by what the Apostle *Paul* wrote to <sup>18, 19, 23.</sup> the *Corinthians*, when he sent *Titus*, one of these Officers, to *Corinth*, to receive the Contribution of that Church for the poor Saints: *We have*, says he, *sent with him a Brother, whose Praise is in the Gospel throughout all the Churches, (and not that only, but who was also chosen of the Churches to travel with us, &c.)* Who was chosen, *χειροτον-  
δεῖς ὑπὸ τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν*, i. e. by the common Consent and Suffrage of the Churches. Therefore these sort of extraordinary Ministers, or Officers, are called *Apostles*, or *Messengers*, of the Churches, because they were chosen and sent by the Churches, and therefore called their Apostles, as below, in *Verse 23.* ἀπόστολοι ἐκκλησιῶν, *They are*, if they be inquired of, the *Apostles* or *Messengers* of the Churches. Now, methinks 'tis very just and reasonable to conclude, that if the Apostles thought the Suffrage of the Churches necessary in the Choice of those Ministers, who were to be their Companions, or Fellow-Labourers, in the Gospel, that the Churches had Power from Christ to chuse their own ordinary Ministers and Officers. This shews us, that tho the Apostles had their Commission immediately from Christ, all their Successors were to have theirs from the Churches; and that no Man, or Set of Men, might arrogate this Power to themselves, the Apostles; put the Churches, even in their Days and Presence, to chuse their own Officers, to shew us where the Power to call and constitute Ministers was lodg'd by Christ, i. e. in his Churches.

We find also, in chusing and sending extraordinary Messengers upon extraordinary Occasions, that the Apostles did not act by their own separate and independent Authority, as may be seen  
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in the Messengers chosen by the Apostles, and Elders, and Church at *Jerusalem*. *Luke*, the sacred Acts xv. Historian, acquaints us, that in the Church at *Antioch* there were some who were for imposing Circumcision on the Gentile Converts, and some others oppos'd it; and when the Dispute was so hot, and the Contention run so high, that the Case could not be amicably adjusted among themselves, they mutually agreed to send Messengers to the Ver. 2. Apostles and Elders at *Jerusalem*. Tho *Paul* and *Barnabas* were there, they did not determine by themselves who shou'd go as Messengers; but in this Case they submitted to the Suffrage of the Church; and the Church at *Antioch* sent *Paul* and *Barnabas*, and certain others with them, not mentioned by Name. Those Messengers being arrived at Ver. 4. *Jerusalem*, they were received of the Apostles and Elders, and of the whole Church. And when they had declared their Message, there was much disputing on the Case. But after long and warm Debate, *James*, who we suppose at that time was Moderator of the Assembly, summ'd up the Debate, and gave his Opinion of the Case in dispute, and what they should determine to send as their Answer. And to *James's* Judgment they all agreed; and therefore 'tis said, Ver. 22. *Then pleas'd* it the Apostles and Elders, and the whole Church, to send chosen Men of their own Company to *Antioch*, with *Paul* and *Barnabas*, namely, *Judas* surnamed *Barsabas*, and *Silas*, chief Men among the Brethren; and they wrote Letters by them after this manner, viz. The Apostles, Elders, and Brethren, send greeting, to the Brethren which are in *Antioch*, in *Syria*, and in *Cilicia*, &c. Nothing in all this Affair seems more plain than this, that tho the Apostles and Elders were present, they had so great regard to the Church, that in chusing Messengers to send to *Antioch* with their Determination, they did not

not act without the Consent and Suffrage of the Church. Nor is any thing more clear than that *the Church* is put in Contradistinctions to *the Apostles and Elders*; therefore we can't gloss it as tho the Apostles and Elders were the Church; for 'tis said, *it pleas'd the Apostles and Elders, and the whole Church.* They can't sure be the Apostles and Elders, and the whole Church too.

Upon the whole, I think we may justly reason, if the Consent and Suffrage of the Churches was necessary in chusing extraordinary Officers and Messengers, and that in the Presence of all the Apostles, then 'tis still necessary in chusing ordinary Officers and Ministers. But you see the first is true, therefore the last. And if the Apostles did not act by any separate and independent Power in chusing extraordinary Officers in the Churches, but by and with the Consent and Suffrage of the Churches, then none of the Apostles Successors have any such separate and independent Power now to act by, but ought in chusing Ministers now to act by the Consent and Suffrage of the People, and that because Christ hath lodg'd this Power of chusing Ministers in his Church.

But to come more close to the Point, we find that in chusing ordinary Pastors and Teachers the Churches did chuse them by their Suffrage, even in the Presence of the Apostles. Therefore, when we find the Apostles only presiding and directing the Churches in this Affair, and not chusing and imposing Ministers or Officers on them by their own proper, separate, and independent Power, we may sure conclude with good Reason that this Grant of chusing her own Officers and Ministers was made by Christ unto his Church, and not to the Clergy alone; and that all Bishops and Elders shou'd lay aside their Usurpation, and leave the Churches, as the Apostles did,

to



to their own proper Work, *i. e.* to chuse, as is most fit and reasonable they shou'd, their own Officers by their Suffrage, as in the Apostles Days.

The Evangelist *Luke*, in his historical Account Acts vi. 2. of this Affair, has told us, *That the Apostles call'd the Multitude together, i. e. the Church, and said, it is not reasonable, that we shou'd leave the Word of God, and serve Tables.* In this Case did the Apostles, when they had assembled the Church, acquaint them, that they, by their own Authority separate and independent of the Church, had chosen seven Men, whom they had appointed over this daily Ministration; and that for the future, their Successors in the Ministry, by their separate Authority, shou'd take care to provide Officers and Ministers for the Churches? Not one Word like it, but the reverse. *Therefore Brethren, say* Ver. 3. *they, go and look out from among you seven Men full of the Holy Ghost and Wisdom, whom we may appoint over this Business.* The Appointment or the Institution of the Office of Deaconship was, you see, by Apostolick Authority and Direction; but the Choice of the Persons, and their Qualifications for the Office, was left in the Power of the Church, which she was now by the Apostles Direction call'd upon to exercise according to the Grant of Christ her Lord and Husband. *And* Ver. 5. *the Saying pleased the Multitude, i. e. the Church, and they chose seven, Stephen and Philip, &c. Whom they set before the Apostles, and when they had prayed they laid their Hands on them.*

This famous Instance gives us a very clear Idea of this whole Affair, as a Precedent for the Churches in After-Ages to the World's End. Here we have the Church call'd together, that they might be unanimous in their Choice; we have the Apostles presiding and directing the Church in their Choice; here is the Power of the People

People exercis'd in chusing by their Suffrage seven Men ; here are the Apostles or Elders confirming the People's Choice by Prayer, and Laying on of Hands. This Instance sets before us every one's proper Work in setting apart Men to any Office in the Church. The Elders, if any, are to preside and to direct, but not to impose ; the People by their Suffrage are to chuse, and the Elders are to confirm the Election by Laying on of Hands. All that the Clergy have to do in this Affair, is, to direct the People in their Choice, and to confirm their Election by Prayer, and laying of their Hands upon the Persons chosen ; which you see is far short of the Part they presume to act in many Places, by their Usurpation of the Church's Power. Hence we may reason, if the Church by her Charter granted by Christ, did, in the Presence of the whole College of Apostles, chuse her ordinary Officers and Teachers, and that by the Advice and Direction of the Apostles ; and the Apostles did not call and constitute her Officers for her, by their own separate and independent Power ; then this Power is in the Church still by the same Grant of Christ ; and no Set of Men in the World shou'd impose Ministers on them, without their Knowledge and Consent previously had.

Acts xiv.  
22, 23.

To set this Matter yet in a clearer Light, and to put it beyond Dispute, the Evangelist *Luke* acquaints us, that *Paul* and *Barnabas* went about, confirming the Souls of the Disciples, and they ordain'd them Elders in every Church. *When they had ordain'd them Elders in every Church, and had pray'd with fasting, they commended them to the Lord.* Here we have again the distinct Parts of Chusers and Ordainers ; we have in this Text *Paul* and *Barnabas*, *ex professo*, on the Work before us. Here, I conceive, *Paul* and *Barnabas* acted  
just

just the same Part as the Apostles did before in the Choice of Deacons; they presided and directed the Churches in their chusing, and on them whom the Churches had chosen, they laid their Hands and pray'd. Queen *Elizabeth's* Bible, or the Translators who dedicated the Bible in the *English* Tongue to Queen *Elizabeth*, printed in the Year 1576, read these Words, according to the Original thus, which is indeed the true Reading: *And when they had ordain'd them Elders by Election in every Church; and they give us the Reason of their so rendring it in the Margin, "For the Word χειροτονήσαντες, say they, " signifies to elect, by putting up the Hands, " which declareth that Ministers were not made " without the Consent of the People. " And Mr. Beza renders it after the same manner, per Suffragia creassent. " This shews, saith he, that " Paul and Barnabas exercised no such Tyranny " over the Churches, as is found in the Roman " Church. " And if we look to the Notation of the Word χειροτονήσαντες, it properly signifies to chuse by Suffrage, or by lifting up the Hand.*

Thus we have a clear Notion of this Action by the common Use of this Word in the Practice of civil Societies chusing Persons to Office; for no Man that is any thing acquainted with the use of this Word, in chusing Men to civil Offices, can be ignorant of what the People do in that Case. Now, no body can dream that *Paul* and *Barnabas*, being but two Persons, did properly χειροτονῆν, i. e. chuse by Lifting up of Hands; but this must be the People's Act, *Paul* and *Barnabas* presiding and directing therein. For, if this had been meant of Ordination, vulgarly speaking, by Imposition of Hand, as our Opponents wou'd willingly persuade us to believe, then, I conceive, it wou'd have been χεῖρας πόνετες for χειροτονία and χειροθεσία

denotes two different Actions; the first denotes the People's Act in chusing by Suffrage; the second, the Elders or Bishops act in Laying on of Hands upon the Persons whom the People have elected. For tho we must allow, that *χειροτονέω* sometimes signifies, and is used for chusing any Way, and for the simple Appointment of a single Person; yet its most proper and common Use and Signification is to chuse by Suffrage: and so 'tis most reasonable to understand it here; because 'tis hard to think, that *Paul* and *Barnabas* would in this Affair go, not only against the common and usual Practice of the other Apostles, but against the Authority of Christ their Lord, who had granted Power to the Churches to chuse their own Officers. And because *Prayer with Fasting* here is express'd as a subsequent Action to *they ordain'd*, which always concludes the Solemnity, and indeed is the proper Work of the Elders or Bishops; we may conclude, that the People or Churches did the first Part by their Suffrage, and the Elders *Paul* and *Barnabas* the last, to conclude the Solemnity of Ordination, as in our Day is usual in some Protestant Churches, with those Bishops and Presbyters, who act in this Affair according to the Rule of Christ, our great Legislator.

Acts xiii.

1, 2, 3.

The 13th Chapter of the *Acts* of the Apostles, may, I think, be allow'd to afford us a little Light in this Case, where we have an Account, *that in the Church at Antioch there were certain Teachers and Prophets, and the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Paul and Barnabas for the Work whereunto I have called them; and when they had fasted and prayed, and layed their Hands on them, they sent them away.* Here, tho the Holy Ghost had fix'd on *Paul* and *Barnabas*, and had given them an internal Call to the Work that was appointed for them, yet you see the Church must proceed regularly, and use her Authority,



Authority, and in a publick and solemn Manner must chuse and set them apart to the Work for which they were qualify'd by the Holy Ghost. The Church must send 'em out to preach the Gospel, which was that peculiar Work which the Lord had called them to. They were accordingly sent out, and at their Return they made a Report to their Principals how they had executed their Commission, and what Success they had met with.

*When they were returned to Antioch from whence they had been recommended to the Grace of God,* Acts xiv. 26, 27. *they gathered the Church together, and rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened a Door of Faith to the Gentiles.* From whence I reason, if the Lord wou'd not by his own absolute and despotic Power send out any Ministers after the Churches were settled, but order the Church to separate them whom he had qualify'd, and they were to be sent out by the Suffrage of the Church; then 'tis plain, that in ordinary the Churches have Power to chuse and send Men whom the Lord hath qualify'd to preach the Gospel of Christ, and this their Mission is a valid Mission.

Before I quit this Head, give me leave to add, that pure Primo-Primitive Antiquity gives us this Case entirely; and early Antiquity is a good Interpreter of the Apostles Practice therein: for the Churches, in the very next Ages after the Apostles, proceeded after the same Mode, and took the same way to appoint and constitute their Officers, as we have seen the Churches did in the Presence of the Apostles. That the Churches did, in the next Ages after the Apostles, chuse their own Ministers or Officers, by the Advice and Direction of their Elders, we have a Cloud of Witnesses at hand; the Decrees of Councils, and the Testimony of very antient Fathers, put this be-

yond dispute. This was the constant and universal Practice of the Churches, until the Pride, Ambition, and Covetousness of the Clergy broke in upon this Right of the Churches, and usurped this their antient Authority, and appropriated all the Power to themselves. But to keep the People in Ignorance of this their antient Right, and to establish themselves in their Usurpation, they cunningly contriv'd to call themselves the Church, as tho they were God's peculiar Portion, his *κληρονομία*, distinct from the People; when God knows they are the least Part thereof. But yet we find, that this antient and laudable Custom continu'd in the Churches till about the middle of the third Century; for till then the *Magdeburg* \* Centuriators say, it was usual for the Church to chuse their Ministers by Lot; but afterwards, as the Usurpation of the Clergy increas'd, this Power of the Churches dwindled away, till it came to meer Mockery and Pageantry, as at this Day among some. In the third Century, we find at *Antioch* the Church chusing a Successor to *Anterius* deceas'd; at *Rome* we find the People chusing *Fabian*; and after his Death we find 'em chusing *Cornelius*. At *Carthage* the Church chose *Cyprian*, about the same time, if *Pontius* in the Life of *Cyprian* says true; "Who, † says he, was chosen to the Bishoprick by the Favour of the People." And this Father *Cyprian* is so full to our Purpose, that I will crave leave to cite his Testimony in this Cause. He was, it seems, address'd to by the Clergy and People of *Spain*, and his Opinion

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\* Usitatum fuerit Ecclesiis per sortem Ministros eligere, unde Clerici à Cleros Ministri dicebantur. *Magd. Hist. Cent. 2. Chap. 61.*

† Dei Judicio & plebis favore ad officium Sacerdotii & Episcopatum gradum.

and Judgment was desir'd both by Letter and Messengers. They sent to him to know, whether they ought to re-admit *Basilides* and *Martial*, two Clergymen whom they had censured for communicating with Idolaters in the Time of Persecution. This being a very weighty Case, and which in all probability wou'd be a Precedent for the Churches to act by for the future, Father *Cyprian* to strengthen his Authority, that his Advice might be receiv'd without hesitation, desir'd some of his Brethren, neighbouring Bishops, to assist herein; and on mature Deliberation of this important Case, *Cyprian* and his Collegues came to this Determination, and sent it as their Answer to the Clergy and Churches of *Spain*. \* " Let not  
" the People flatter themselves, that they can be  
" free from the Contagion, if they communicate  
" with an infected Priest, and give their Consent  
" to the unjust and unlawful Episcopacy of their  
" Bishop: for which Reason, the People obedient  
" to the Lord's Commands, and fearing God,  
" ought to separate themselves from a wicked  
" Bishop, and not mix themselves with the Wor-  
" ship of a sacrilegious Priest; for they, *i. e.* the  
" People, chiefly have the Power of chusing wor-  
" thy Priests, and of refusing the unworthy;

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\* Nec sibi plebs blandiatur, quasi immunis esse à contagio delicti possit cum Sacerdote peccatore communicans, & ad injustum & illicitum præpositi sui Episcopatum consensum suum commodans: propter quod plebs obsequens præceptis Dominicis & Deum metuens à peccatore præposito separare se debet; nec se ad sacrilegi Sacerdotis sacrificia miscere; quando ipsa maxime habeat potestatem vel eligendi dignos Sacerdotes, vel indignos recusandi, quod id ipsum videmus, de Divina Autoritate descendere ---- de universæ fraternitatis Suffragio ---- diligenter de Traditione Divina & Apostolica Observatione servandum est & tenendum apud nos quoque, ut fere per universas Provincias tenetur.

" which

“ which Power, say they, came down from Divine Authority. ” And afterwards speaking of Ordination, they say, “ ’Twas done by the Suffrage of the whole Church. ” And farther they say, “ That this was to be kept and observ’d as a Divine Tradition, and Apostolick Observation with them, as it was in almost all the Provinces. ” Now this Testimony is of the more Weight, because ’tis not the hasty Opinion of one single Bishop alone, but the Testimony of several Bishops in Council together, and that on mature Consideration; and that not only their Opinion in Matters of Speculation, but their Joint-Testimony as to Matter of Fact, and that in their own Day and Practice; and that not only the Practice of one or two Churches, but the Practice of the Churches in almost all the Provinces; and that not by a Power usurp’d, but derived from Divine Authority, and by Apostolick Observation: and this they did not only assert, but gave it under their Hands, as that which they wou’d stand by and vindicate, if there was occasion.

I am not ignorant, that Cardinal *Bellarmino* and others of that Side say, that this Liberty of the People in chusing their own Pastors, was granted to them at first by the Indulgence of the Clergy; but they seeing them abusing this Power, by little and little took it from them again. This is an honest Confession, that the People had such a Power in time past; but it fails both in saying that it was granted by way of Indulgence from the Clergy, and in suggesting that they had power to take it from the People again; for no Man on Earth hath Power to take it from the Churches, for it is granted to them by Christ, and his Grant is irreversible. Not any Pope or Bishop whatsoever can reverse what Christ hath granted to his Church. Thus



Thus I have gone thro the first Part of my Task; and I think I have clearly prov'd from the Grant of Christ, the Practice of the Apostles and the Churches in their Days, and the Practice of the Churches in the Ages next to the Apostolick Age, that the Churches have Power to chuse and constitute their own Pastors and Teachers. And having prov'd this Point so fully, I might very well be discharged from the rest that is behind, as what is of no great consequence; but seeing there is so much made of it by the Adversaries of this Truth, I look on my self oblig'd to give it its due Consideration. I come therefore next to answer to the great and noisy Objection which hath been, and is at this Day, raised against this true Protestant Mission which I have been proving. The Objection then is this.

*Obj.* Tho it may be granted, that the Churches have some Right to chuse their Ministers, yet our Mission is not valid; we have no Authority to preach the Word, or to administer the Sacraments, because in our Ordination we have not the Hands of Bishops laid on us, who derive their Episcopal Authority by an uninterrupted Line of Succession of Bishops from the Apostles. This is what our Adversaries say ought to be, to make our Mission valid; and he who does not thus derive his Mission, or Authority to minister in holy Things from Bishops, who derive their Authority from the Apostles by an uninterrupted rectilineal Succession of Bishops thus Episcopally ordain'd, hath no valid Mission, or Authority to preach the Word, or minister in holy Things; and the Consequence is, that all his Administrations are null and void. And this they take special care to insinuate into the People, that they may invalidate our Ministry, and by this means make the People become Bigots to themselves, as the

the only Ministers of the Gospel of Christ: And they stick not to affirm, that the People hazard the Salvation of their Souls, who attend on our Preaching, or any of our Administrations; for whatever we do in holy Things, is as tho 'twas never done; all our Sacred Ministrations are a Nullity.

Now, if as these Men assert Baptism is absolutely necessary to Salvation, and Lay-Baptism with these Men is no Baptism at all, and all Men not Episcopally ordain'd are with them but Lay-Men, and all Ordinances administer'd by such, lose all their Efficacy as to the Good of their Souls who sit under their Administrations; surely, my Brethren, we had need all look to our selves, for we run great hazard: They who attend on our Administrations, lose not only the present Benefit of the Ordinances which we administer as the Ordinances of Christ, but risque the Salvation of their Souls; and we our selves, who according to these Men, usurp an Authority we have no Right to, had need look to our selves, for we must be accountable to the Lord for the Destruction of those Souls who shall be lost by our means. And if 'tis as our Objectors say, that there is no Christianity without Baptism, and there can be no valid Baptism without regular Mission, and that there is no regular Mission without regular Ordination, and that there is no regular Ordination but by Bishops, who derive their Episcopal Authority from the Apostles in a direct Line of uninterrupted Succession of Bishops Episcopally ordain'd; these Men themselves had need be very sure, that they have this very Mission they pretend to, and which they say we want; since they hang not only the Salvation of others Souls thereon, but the Salvation of their own Souls, which is a Matter of the highest Consequence. One  
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wou'd think they shou'd make their own Mission as plain as a Mathematical Demonstration ; but after all their Bravadoes, and great swelling Words, 'tis just what the Fowler said of the Nightingale, *Vox & praterea nihil*. And as to the Danger they thunder out, that the People are in who attend our Administrations, it is Noise, an empty Noise without Hurt, 'tis Thunder without Lightning. Therefore be not scared, my Friends, the Danger is not so great, as these Men wou'd persuade you to believe it is ; which I hope to shew you presently. What the Objection supposes we want in our Ordination, we readily confess we han't, nor do we desire it ; because we don't need it, for as long as we have a Succession of the Apostles Doctrine, we have sufficient in our Churches to give us a valid Mission. And this is what the whole Protestant Reformation rest on for their Mission. For we who are Dissenters here in *England* from the Establish'd Church, have the same valid Mission with all Protestants, not only abroad, but with the Church of *England* herself ; for we have as regular a Mission as she (and consequently our Objectors themselves ) can justly pretend to : For we have internal Qualifications, and an external Call of a *Company of faithful Men, where the pure Word of God is preach'd, and the Sacraments are duly administer'd* ; which according to the 19th Article of the Church of *England* is a visible Church of Christ : and we are consecrated, or set apart with *Fasting and Prayer, and laying on of the Hands of the Presbyters*. But with our Objectors this won't do ; 'tis not sufficient, unless we have the Hands of Bishops, who derive their Episcopal Authority from the Apostles in a direct Line of uninterrupted Succession. Uninterrupted Succession ? verily, considering what Stress there is laid thereon, the very Sound of

those Words are shocking to a considerate Mind; for it don't seem rational that there is any such thing to be had: 'Tis altogether improbable, if not impossible, that there can be any such thing; nay, 'tis impossible in the Nature of the thing, without a continued Series of Miracles in every Age to make it good.

Let us a little consider the Nature of Episcopal Government: What is there in the Nature of Episcopal Government, to render it more stable or lasting, or to defend it self against the Pride, Ambition, Avarice, or Malice of designing Men, more than there is in the Nature of Civil Government to defend it self, and seem to it self a rectilineal Succession without Interruption? Is there any Instance can be given under Heaven, that any Civil Government hath maintain'd it self in a rectilineal Succession uninterrupted for half so long as this uninterrupted Line of Episcopal Authority pretends to? And can any Man satisfy himself that this Episcopal Authority hath met with none of those unlucky Incidents to interrupt it, as all human Governments have met with? 'Tis with me hardly credible. Nay, we must suppose the Great and All-wise God to interpose by his wonder-working Power to maintain this otherwise impossible Thing: And 'tis not easy to persuade a rational Man to believe, that our All-wise God and Governor wou'd put himself to the Expence of a continued Series of Miracles, without a visible Necessity.

But allowing what is unreasonable to grant, that 'tis not improbable in general but such a thing may be; from what Apostle would these Men have us derive this uninterrupted Succession? I can't think they will say from St. *Thomas*, whose Province, they say, was to preach to the *Par-*

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*thians*



*thians* and *Indians*. This will be too far to fetch it. And as for *Andrew*, *Philip*, *Matthew*, *Bartholomew*, and *Matthias*, &c. their Succession is so very obscure, 'twill be too great Trouble to search after it. And for any Succession from *Paul* at *Antioch*, I suppose we need not trouble our selves about it: That is swallow'd up long ago. And for Succession from *James* at *Jerusalem*, I don't remember that any of our Objectors ever pretended to derive from him. I conclude we must come nearer home: Is it then from *Rome* that we must derive this uninterrupted Succession of Episcopal Power? Is it from the Apostle *Peter* at *Rome*? This I fix on, as that which I presume these Men pretend to: And I am strengthen'd in this my Presumption, because they have so great Esteem of the *Romish* Orders, that if a Jesuit, or *Romish* Priest come over to them, he hath no need to be reordain'd; he shall be received as a Brother in Holy Orders: but if a Dissenter, who hath been ordained by Protestant Presbyters, shall propose to conform, he must renounce his former Ordination, and be reordain'd, before he shall be admitted to officiate with them. Taking this for granted, I must say 'tis hard Measure we have from these Men, that they should send us for this uninterrupted Episcopal Authority where 'tis not to be had: Nor is it over modest in these Men, to object against our Mission the want of that which they have not in their own. Tho I must confess 'tis an ungrateful Task to lay open other People's Infirmities, and discover their Weaknesses, yet being under a Necessity to vindicate our selves, nobody can take it amiss to have their Nakedness discover'd by taking away the Veil.

Wou'd these Men send us to *Rome* for uninterrupted Episcopal Authority? I say, 'tis not to

be had there for us: And 'tis not a little dubious whether these Men have any regular Episcopal Authority from *Rome* themselves. And if any Man will but impartially consider these three Things, he will with me see it very suspicious: For,

1. The *Romanists* strenuously deny that ever the Church of *England* had any regular Episcopal Authority from them, and as yet *sub judice lis est*. They say that the Ministers of the Church of *England* are no Ministers, but Laymen; and that the Church of *England* hath no regular Bishops or Priests; and that all their Administrations are invalid, as well as ours; which may be seen by what Mr. *Ward* \* printed but last Year. Sure, before we submit and yield up our present Orders, and crave regular Episcopal Orders from them, 'tis but reasonable to expect that they produce their regular Episcopal Orders from *Rome*, and make their uninterrupted Orders from *Rome* good against the Objections of the *Romanists*. Let 'em answer more fully the Allegation of the *Romanist* against the Consecrations of the Protestant Bishops, and set the *Nag's-Head* Consecration in a clearer Light. But was the Denial of the *Romanists* all we had to say, we had indeed no great reason to scruple; because we believe they won't stick to speak falsely to reproach the Reformation, and load the Protestants with Infamy: But that which strengthens this Consideration, and adds Weight to the *Romanists* Denial, is,

2. Our Reformers renounc'd all Orders received from *Rome*: They disclaim'd all Papistical Authority. It was a thing common in Queen

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\* *Ward's Controversy of Ordination.*

*Elizabeth's* Days to hear the Papists reproach the Reformation with what these Men are pleas'd to reproach us, *i. e.* that the Protestant Reformers had no regular Mission; and that the Church of *England* her self had no regular Bishops, or Priests. And this is the Burden of their Song to this very Day. Now, if our Reformers had known that they had receiv'd, according to these Mens Notions, regular Episcopal Authority from *Rome*, (which they must know, to be sure, if it was true) it had been easy for them, while things were fresh in Memory, to have prov'd their own Mission, which was call'd into question by their great Antagonists. It had been no Difficulty for them to have produc'd the authentick Records of every Bishop's Consecration, (which is to this Day call'd in question,) and have deriv'd their Succession from the *Romanists* themselves, especially when they cou'd be but one or two Removes from them. But alas! instead of this, our Reformers disclaim'd and renounc'd all Orders receiv'd from *Rome*. Now, I appeal to any Man of Reason, whether 'tis not very suspicious that ever these Men shou'd have those regular uninterrupted Orders which they pretend to from *Rome*, when the Papists deny that they ever had any from them, and to this Day reproach the Church of *England* for want of it; and our Reformers, instead of solidly proving their Mission regularly deriv'd from *Rome*, solemnly renounc'd and disclaim'd any Orders receiv'd from *Rome*, saying, We defy, detest, and abhor their stinking greasy Antichristian Orders. " I would not " have you think, says \* *Whitaker*, that we make " such reckoning of your Orders, as to hold

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\* Whitak. contra Dureum.

“ our own Vocation unlawful without them:  
 “ Therefore keep your Orders to your selves.”  
 “ You are much deceiv’d, says \* *Dr. Fulk*, if you  
 “ think we esteem your Offices of Bishops, Priests,  
 “ and Deacons, any better than Laymen; and  
 “ you presume too much, to think that we re-  
 “ ceive your Ordering to be lawful.” And this  
 was the Language of the whole Reformation  
 at home and abroad. Can we think that our  
 wise and holy Reformers would have thus done,  
 had they either believed that the Validity of all  
 their Administrations depended thereon, or had  
 known that they had received regular Orders  
 from *Rome*? No, sure. Does it not then appear  
 very suspicious that these Men should have those  
 valid Orders which they pretend to from *Rome*,  
 when, if they have, they must have them from  
 these Reformers, who thus disclaim’d any Epis-  
 copal and Priestly Orders receiv’d from *Rome*?  
 And is it not very unfair to object that against  
 our Mission, which they have not in their own?  
 Add to this,

3. That the great Writer of the Reforma-  
 tion of the *English Church* (who must in Charity  
 be suppos’d to know as much of this Matter as  
 any of these Boasters of Episcopal Succession)  
 has left this Matter very doubtful, where it ought  
 to have been clear’d up, if it had been fact: I  
 mean, in his \* *Exposition of the Twentythird Article*,  
 which treats in particular of a regular Mission.  
 “ This Article, says he, does not resolve this in-  
 “ to any particular Constitution, but leaves that  
 “ Matter open and at large for such Accidents  
 “ as had happen’d, and such as might still hap-

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\* *Fulk’s Answer to Counterfeit Cath.*

† *Bishop Burnet’s Exposition of the 39 Articl.* p. 257, 258.

“ pen.



“ pen. They who drew it, had the State of the  
 “ several Churches before their Eyes that had  
 “ been differently reform’d; and altho their own  
 “ had been less forc’d to go out of the beaten  
 “ Path than other, yet they knew that all things  
 “ among themselves had not gone according to  
 “ those Rules which ought to be sacred in regular  
 “ Times. But Necessity has no Law; and is a  
 “ Law to it self.” Here is an ingenuous Acknowledgment that the Church of *England* in her Reformation, with respect to her Mission, or Orders, *went out of the beaten Path*, as well as others: And if so, we may well conclude the Reason why our Reformers did not undertake to prove their regular Mission, or Episcopal Authority, deriv’d from *Rome*. Now put all this together, and I believe you will not judge me uncharitable, when I say ’tis very suspicious that these Men han’t themselves what they object we want. For if the *Romanists* Denial, that ever they had any regular Episcopal Authority from them, and the Silence of our first Reformers as to that Point, and their disclaiming any Orders receiv’d from *Rome*, and this back’d with the Acknowledgment of the great Historiographer of the *English* Reformation, that the Church of *England* went out of the beaten Path for her Mission, don’t make it dubious, I don’t know what we shall say is dubious. But I will venture to say more, and not fear being judg’d as censorious: That the Line was broke, and the uninterrupted Succession is lost. For if going out of the beaten Path for Episcopal Mission, and disclaiming any Episcopal Authority from *Rome*, is not a manifest Breach in the Line, I know not what is. And if the Line is broken but in one Link, uninterrupted Succession is at an end. Thus we see what these Mens swelling Words and great Boasts of uninterrupted Succession

sion of Episcopal Authority is come to ; and what little Reason we have to be terrify'd for the want of what they themselves han't ; and how unreasonable 'tis for 'em to object against our Mission, what they want in their own.

But to try the Strength of this Objection, and to allow it its due Weight, we will for once, and for Argument's sake, grant what you see is difficult, if not impossible, for these Men to prove, *i. e.* that our Reformers did not go out of the beaten Path, but derived their Episcopal Authority from the *Romanists* in a regular way ; yet this, if proved, will not afford uninterrupted Succession of Episcopal Authority from the Apostles ; because the Church of *Rome* was become antichristian. And 'tis a mere Jest to say Antichrist can convey valid Orders to Men to preach the Gospel of Christ. Sure, our Blessed Saviour never gave Antichrist any such Authority. I am well appris'd that our Objectors are so fond of *Romish* Orders, that they affirm, That tho the *Roman* Church was a corrupt Church in many Things, yet she was not become antichristian till after they had received their Orders from her ; for, say they, the Errors of the Church of *Rome* were the Errors of particular Men, until the cursed Council at *Trent* had declared and decreed them to be the Principles of the Church. Tho 'tis not hard to shew that the contrary to this is Truth ; that the Characters of Antichrist, according to the Apostle's Description, were visible in that Church long before that Council sat ; and that the Reformers in *Germany* separated from her as such before that time, as is manifest in the Historical Accounts of that Reformation, that Council being called under pretext to heal the Breach, and to reform what was judg'd amiss ; yet allowing what these Men would have, 'twill appear to be

be but a very sorry Refuge; 'twill in the Sequel ruin their own Cause.

For if *Rome* had still the Characters of a true Church, and had a valid Mission at the Reformation, then the Reformation was a Schism, and not a lawful Separation; for according to these Gentlemens Opinion, and their Treatment of Dissenters from them, every Separation from a true Church, tho' she is corrupt, is schismatical. Now if the Church of *Rome* was only corrupt, and not antichristian, and she had the Character of a true Church, and cou'd give valid Mission, then our Reformers were Schismatics for separating from her, as a true Church. If so, then this not only scandalizeth and reproaches the whole Reformation, but damns their own Mission at once; for this cuts the Line of uninterrupted Succession all to pieces; for no Hereticks and Schismatics, according to their own Notion, (and 'tis but just to allow them to be consistent with themselves) can have valid Mission. Now, if these Men received any Mission from *Rome*, it must be from the hands of these excommunicated and damn'd Hereticks and Schismatics, our first Reformers; and these Men continuing the Schism, tho' perhaps unwillingly, all their Orders must be schismatical, and consequently invalid, according to the Strictness of their own Principle: For our first Reformers were excommunicated and damn'd by the Church of *Rome* as Hereticks and Schismatics; and therefore the Papists look on all the Ministers of the Church of *England* as mere Laymen; nor will they admit any of them to officiate with them without Reordination, at this Day, as Mr. *Ward* but last Year assures us. Now 'twill be very difficult for these Men to extricate themselves from this Dilemma, to make their Orders valid, according to their

own Notion : For either the Church at *Rome* was antichristian at the Reformation, or she was not. If she was not, then the Reformation was a Schism, &c. But if she was, as undoubtedly she was, then she had no valid Mission to give ; for *nil dat quod non habet* is here good. I suppose I need not stand to prove that *Rome* was become antichristian at the Reformation : 'Twas the universal Cry at the Reformation that the Church at *Rome* was in Apostacy, and guilty of damnable Idolatry ; that *Rome* was the Whore of *Babylon*, the Pope Antichrist : Which Charge of Antichristianism, Apostasy, and Idolatry, is altogether inconsistent with Apostolical Succession of Bishops ; for it can't be suppos'd that antichristian Idolaters can convey down to us the true Christian Apostolical Mission. This being true, all Apostolical Episcopal Authority, which came by any Bishops into *Rome*, whether from *Peter*, or from *Paul*, *Joseph* of *Arimathea*, or any other Apostolick Man, is lost in this dead Lake of Antichristianism, and spoil'd, as the Rivers which run into the dead Lake *Asphaltites*. 'Twas on this score our Reformers disclaim'd and renounc'd all Orders from *Rome* as antichristian, knowing that Antichrist had no Authority from Christ, to give Commission to any to minister in holy Things. " We say, says " *Whitaker*, that their Ministry was corrupt, " and therefore we ought not to be made or " created Bishops by them. Tho our Bishops " and Ministers be not ordained by Papistical " Bishops, yet are they orderly and lawfully ordain'd." So that unless we will grant the most incredible and most absurd thing in the World, Transubstantiation not excepted, viz. that Antichrist hath Authority from Christ to convey valid Orders to Men to minister in holy Things,



Things, these Men themselves must still want what they boast of, *i. e.* uninterrupted Episcopal Authority from *Rome*; for if Antichristianism don't interrupt the Line, nothing can: For if this be true, the *Romanists* themselves will allow there is no true Mission to be had from them. For says Mr. *Ward*,\* "Which Charge is inconsistent with  
" Apostolical Succession of Bishops and Priests,  
" and with all Christian Priesthood; for it can't  
" be suppos'd that Antichrist can either convey  
" down to us the true Christian Priesthood, or  
" be capable of ordaining Priests and Bishops in  
" the Church of God." From hence then 'tis plain, that these Men can't have that uninterrupted Episcopal Authority in their Mission, which they pretend to have.

But suppose we should grant that our first Reformers were not Hereticks or Schismatics, nor *Rome* antichristian, which is, you see, inconsistent, if not contradictory; yet there is an insuperable Difficulty behind for these Men to solve, to make good their uninterrupted Succession in that Church. Two Things render this Task morally impossible, according to our Objectors own Principles: 1. Lay-Baptism. 2. Schisms, Heresies, and Simony.

It is no Secret, but notoriously known, that † Lay-Baptism, with our Objectors, is no Baptism at all; and those not baptiz'd with them, are not Christians. And sure those who are not christianiz'd, cannot possess, much less convey valid Mission to others to preach the Word, &c. Now it has been, they say, a Practice in the Church at *Rome*, by the Pope's Licence, to per-

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\* *Ward's Controversy of Ordination*, p. 26.

† *Witness the new Sect of Anabaptists near Exon.*

mit Midwives to baptize, in case the Child is in danger of Death, lest it should die unbaptized, and be damn'd. Now we will suppose, what is not impossible, and therefore may be supposed, that some of those Children who were thus lay-baptiz'd, happen'd to be Males, and did recover and live, and when grown up, might get into the Priesthood: All their Orders, not being regularly baptiz'd, must of course be invalid; and if their Orders were invalid, then all their Administrations must of course be null and void. Whomsoever then these Priests or Bishops baptiz'd or ordain'd, were still without Baptism or Ordination, as tho they had never been baptiz'd or ordain'd; and consequently all from them, &c. In this case, who can be morally certain of the right Line in that Church? And if we miss it but in one, the Line is broke, and so farewell uninterrupted Succession: For this uninterrupted Succession must run in Persons regularly baptized, and regularly ordain'd; and either of these becoming irregular, breaks the Line. But if we cou'd slip over this Difficulty, and take but little notice of it, yet,

(2.) Schisms, Heresies, and Simony in that Church, are such a *Gordian Knot* which can never be untied. That there have been Hereticks, Schismatics, and Simoniacks in that Church, is so notorious, that I will not waste any of your Time to pretend to prove it. As for Schisms, two or three Popes at one time damning and censuring one another, is evident Proof of this. But I shall instance only in one, which is too notorious to be denied; I mean that of the Heretick and Schismatick *Novatian*, who broke off from *Cornelius* his lawful Bishop, and set up another Altar against *Cornelius* and the Church with him. This Heretick *Novatian* being a Clinick,

i. e. a Christian baptiz'd on his Bed by Sprinkling, which was then, and ought to be still look'd upon as imperfect Baptism, he was by Canon incapacitated for the Priesthood: But being a cunning designing Man, he found means to get into the Priesthood; and being a Priest, his Ambition prompted him on to obtain a Bishoprick. To gain this his End, he broach'd an heretical Opinion, that it was unlawful to receive again into Communion those who had relaps'd into Idolatry in the time of Persecution, tho they might be truly penitent. By this means he made a Party in the Church, because *Cornelius* and the Church did receive such. Under this Pretext *Novatian* and his Party broke off from the Church, and set up for themselves. *Novatian* being the Head and Leader of the Party, they chose him for their Bishop. And being Bishop elect, he only wanted Consecration: And to obtain that, he sent, as they say, to three neighbouring Bishops in *Italy* to come and endeavour to heal the Breach in the Church between *Cornelius* and him. These three Bishops, willing to do the good Office of Peace-making, went to *Rome*; and when *Novatian* had got them there, he insinuated himself into them; and being but weak Men, as the Story says, he made them tipsy, and in their Cups, *horribile dictu!* they laid their Hands on that impudent Man, & fit *Episcopus*, and, to be sure, in the right Line. Now this infamous Heretick and Schismatick, and his Party, quickly fill'd the Christian World in the East and South, and especially the West, with Persons heretically and schismatically baptiz'd and ordain'd. And this Schism continuing so long, for great part of one whole Century, an innumerable Company of Persons must be baptized by these Schismaticks, and a world of Bishops and Priests schismatically ordain'd,

ordain'd, who were all condemn'd by Councils, and excommunicated by the Church; and yet when this Schism was healed, all were receiv'd into Communion without either Rebaptization, or Reordination. Since by these Mens own Principles neither Persons lay-baptiz'd, or heretically or schismatically baptiz'd or ordain'd, can possess, much less convey valid Mission, how is it possible here to find out the rectilineal Apostolical Succession? This is so thick a Brake, that these Men will never be able to get thro with whole Gowns and Cassocks, but must leave their uninterrupted Orders behind them: For if we grant all true before, the Line is here so interrupted, that 'tis impossible to find out which is the right Line from the false; for 'tis all truly Catholick now. Nor will it at all mend the matter, if they say the Schism was on t'other side. For whether *Cornelius* and his Party had broken the Bond of Charity, and so were the Schismatics, by giving just Cause to *Novatian* and his Party to separate from them; or whether *Novatian* and those who adhered to him, who separated from *Cornelius*, were the Schismatics for separating without just Cause; the Case is the same: A notorious Schism there was, which continued a long time; in which time there must be a Multitude schismatically baptiz'd and ordain'd by either Party; and these, altho they were condemn'd by Council, and excommunicated by the Church, were receiv'd again without Rebaptization or Reordination.

As Heresies and Schisms, so Simony will interrupt the Line of Succession. Doctor *Whitby* says,  
 " That \* this was the Doctrine and Practice of  
 " the universal Church of Christ, That simo-  
 " niacal Ordinations were in their own Nature

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\* *Dr. Whitby's Appendix to his Sermons*, p. 306.



“ null and void ; and he that thus administer’d  
 “ them, gave nothing ; and he that thus recei-  
 “ ved them, received nothing.” And he \* cites  
 Doctor *Forbes*, as being of the same mind, “ That  
 “ the lawful Succession of true Pastors is in-  
 “ terrupted and broken by Simony ; and every  
 “ Ecclesiastical Person who is simoniacally pro-  
 “ moted is irregular, and of right allien from  
 “ the Priesthood, suspended and depriv’d from  
 “ his Office, and lies under an Anathema.” And  
 to confirm this, the Doctor † cites the Decrees of  
 Councils, Determinations of Popes, the Opinions  
 of Fathers, &c. And he farther acquaints us,  
 that this cursed Simony was notoriously practis’d  
 in the Church of || *Rome*, from the ninth to the  
 sixteenth Century : and within this time Si-  
 mony so prevail’d, that Bishopricks were sold  
 publickly ; and that he had them who gave most  
 for them ; and that all Ecclesiastical Degrees,  
 even from the Popedom to the Door-Keepers,  
 were oppress’d with damnable Simony ; and that  
 this spiritual Robbery obtain’d in all Places.  
 Now, “ Seeing, says \*\* he, the Ordinations of  
 “ Popes, Bishops, and Presbyters in the Church  
 “ of *Rome* for six hundred Years were very fre-  
 “ quently simoniacal, and so conferr’d upon  
 “ them no sacerdotal Power, and so cou’d give  
 “ them no Authority to confer this Power up-  
 “ on others ; hence doth it necessarily follow,  
 “ that at the beginning of the Reformation it  
 “ is utterly uncertain whether there were any  
 “ Bishops or Priests in that Church, or who

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\* Dr. Whitby’s *Appendix to his Sermons*, p. 304.

† Ibid. p. 307, 308, &c.

|| Ibid. p. 310.

\*\* Ibid. p. 317.

“ those

“ those Bishops and Priests were ; and 'tis as evi-  
 “ dent, that what can never be made known, or  
 “ certain, or even probable, after so long conti-  
 “ nuance of Ordinations, *de jure & de facto* null  
 “ and void, can never by divine Institution be  
 “ made necessary, either to the being or well-be-  
 “ ing of the Church of Christ.” Now from hence  
 any Man may easily see what certain uninterrup-  
 ted Orders we may expect from Rome ; and what  
 so great Reason these Men have to boast of their  
 own uninterrupted Mission, and condemn all  
 other Mens, who pretend not to the same.

But if we shou'd be so well scented, as to find  
 out the true Apostolick Piece in this dreadful  
 Rapture, and be able to trace it up to the Head,  
 there we shall be in eternal Confusion ; for here is  
 so great a Contention who was the Apostles true  
 Successor, that no Soul can be certain who was  
 ordain'd by the Apostles, if either was ; whether  
*Linus* or *Clemens*, *Cletus* or *Anacletus*. But, I  
 perceive, the most Votes fall upon *Linus* and  
*Clemens* ; but which of them were Apostolically  
 ordain'd, or whether either of them was, no Soul  
 can tell. And for the uninterrupted Line to be  
 thus hamper'd at the first Link, is very ominous.  
 But to solve this Difficulty, and to make out a  
 perfect Line, some, as Mr. *Echard* in his \* *Eccle-  
 siastical History* tells us, suppose that there might  
 be at Rome two Churches ; the one of *Gentiles*  
 headed by St. *Paul*, and the other of *Jewish* Con-  
 verts headed by St. *Peter* ; and that upon the  
 Death of the Apostles, *Linus* succeeded St. *Peter*,  
 and *Clemens* St. *Paul* ; but after the Distinction of  
*Jew* and *Gentile* fail'd, on the Death of *Cletus* (or  
*Anacletus*) there was a Coalition of both under

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\* *Echard's Eccles. Hist.* p. 273.

the surviving Bishop *Clemens*, and in his Line the Succession run for the future.

Tho this is a pretty Contrivance, and ingenious enough, yet the Contrivers spoil all, as to the uninterrupted Succession, by saying that this is uncertain, when it ought to be the most certain Thing in the World: Nor will the *Romans* admit this Opinion on any Terms. But if we should admit of this Contrivance to solve this Difficulty, it will involve us in more: For, 1. We can't reconcile these two Churches at *Rome* with the Scripture, which tells us but of one Church there. 2. There will be two independent Churches, and two independent Bishops in one City at one time; which will be inconsistent with their Notion of one Church, and one Bishop only, in one City at the same time. Besides, this is the way to make *St. Paul*, a Bishop of *Rome* too, equal to *Peter*, the Prince and supreme Bishop of *Rome*; which the *Romans* will by no means allow. 3. If *Linus* and *Clemens* were ordain'd Bishops of *Rome*, it must be in the Apostles Life-time; they cou'd not be ordain'd by them after they were dead: And if so, here must be two Bishops over one Church at one time, *i. e.* Bishop *Peter* and Bishop *Linus* over one and the same Body or Church, and Bishop *Paul* and Bishop *Clemens*: Which these Men, according to their Principles of Episcopal Authority, must not allow, to be consistent with themselves; for this would be the way to Presbytery and Independency direct, and to give up their Episcopal Supremacy. If they say they might be ordain'd Bishops by the Apostles, but yet have no Government or Care of the Church, that might be in the hands of Bishop *Peter* and Bishop *Paul*; then this is to make Pastors without Flocks, which is absurd; for Pastors and Flocks are Relates, and necessarily suppose one  
I another.

another. If they were not ordain'd in the Apostles Life-time, they cou'd not be after their Death, and so cou'd not be the Apostles Successors, nor convey rectilineal Succession of Apostolical Authority. So that we have altogether lost this uninterrupted Succession; and where to find it, no Soul, I believe, in this World can tell.

Thus you see in what Intricacies and Difficulties this pretended uninterrupted Succession of Episcopal Authority from the Apostles is involved, and how impossible it is for these Boasters of it to clear up now their own Mission, who pretend to this Succession; for if this fails 'em, as you see it necessarily must, their Mission is lost, and they have no regular Mission at all, as \* Mr. *Whiston* has fully shewn, not being chosen by the People, as they ought to be. You see, tho they claim from *Rome*, the *Romans* deny they ever had any regular Episcopal Authority from them; our Reformers confirm this Denial by disclaiming any Orders received from *Rome*; and the late Bishop *Burnet* acknowledges that they went out of the beaten Path for their Mission. And if we allow this, that they might have regular Mission in the *Roman* way, the Church of *Rome* being antichristian before, their Mission could not be apostolical; for no Protestant can be so vain as to say antichristian Idolaters can have Authority from Christ, to give valid Mission to any Men to preach his Gospel, or to minister in holy Things. And if we will be so perfectly good-humour'd, as to allow the Church of *Rome* not to be antichristian, then our Reformers must be Hereticks and Schismatics, and as such, being cursed and

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\* *Whiston's All real Clergy-Men, or none are real Clergy-Men.*



damn'd by the Church at *Rome*, as a true Church, they cou'd convey no true apostolical uninterrupted Mission to us. But if we allow the Church of *Rome* not to be antichristian, nor our Reformers Schismaticks, which is inconsistent, yet you see that the Lay-Baptisms, Heresies, and notorious Schisms and Simony in that Church, make it morally impossible to derive uninterrupted Succession through that Church. But if we were so lucky as to hit upon the right Catholick Line, and could trace it up to the Head, there we must leave it as one of the most uncertain Things in the World: so impossible is it for us to derive any uninterrupted Succession of Episcopal Authority from the Apostle *Peter* through *Rome*.

Thus I have shewn that there is nothing of weight in this noisy Objection; and consequently our Mission to minister in holy Things by a Call of the Faithful in Christ, wherenpon the Word of God is preach'd, and the Sacraments are duly administer'd, is a valid Mission. And we have just Authority to preach the Word, and administer all Ordinances, according to the Rule of the Gospel, altho we never have the Hands of Bishops laid on us in our Ordination, who pretend to have, but in reality can't have their Episcopal Authority deriv'd from the Apostle *Peter* in a direct Line of uninterrupted Succession of Bishops regularly ordained, who were neither Hereticks, Schismaticks, nor Simoniacks.

It appears, therefore, that we have as valid Mission to minister in holy Things, as any Protestant Teachers have, not excepting the Objectors themselves; for this is the Foundation on which the whole Protestant Reformation stands: For to claim, or to depend on any Authority from *Rome* to preach the Gospel of Christ, is in short to renounce at once the Reformation, and to pro-

claim the whole Reformation schismatical. We therefore ought to adhere to the true Protestant Principle, and to think our Orders, according to that and the Holy Scripture, to preach the Gospel, regular, without this uninterrupted Succession, &c. which we hear so much boasting of, but in fact is not to be had.

Nor ought we to give our selves any Uneasiness about the Hazard these Men dream any Persons run by attending on our Ministry or Administrations, since 'tis not rational, much less christian, to believe that our good and gracious God, and all-wise Saviour and Governor, who so much tenders the Welfare and Salvation of his People's Souls, wou'd in Wisdom hang the Comforts, much less the Salvation of their Souls on such a precarious, uncertain, and impossible Thing as uninterrupted Succession: For if there can be no Salvation without regular Baptism, and no regular Baptism without regular Mission; and there can be no regular Mission or Authority to baptize but what is deriv'd from the Apostles in a direct uninterrupted Line of Succession, &c. and this uninterrupted Succession is so very uncertain, and so much involv'd, as you have heard; Good God! who can be sure of his Christianity? We may be all Heathens, for ought we know, or can know to the contrary. What perplexing Doubts, and dismaying Fears must this unscriptural and antichristian Notion raise in the Minds of the considerate part of Christians? Blessed be God, we see the Vanity thereof, and have reason to rejoice that we have such clear Light, as to see that this pretended uninterrupted Succession can be nothing in reality, but an Invention and Trick of the *Romish* Priests, or, if you will, a piece of *Romish* Priest-Craft, to awe the Vulgar, and to keep 'em in continual Slavery

very or Bigottry to themselves. 'Tis in short, I apprehend, a Trick to maintain themselves in the Possession of that Power which was in the hands of the People, and which they have usurp'd. 'Tis by this means they domineer and lord it over God's Heritage. 'Twas by this means the Papal Hierarchy was establish'd; and 'tis by this that they demand Exemption from the Power of the Civil Magistrate; and by this they assert that they have the Power of making and constituting Ministers independent of any Power under Heaven; and that no Ruler, King, or Emperor, no People, Church, or Community of Christians, have any Power to call or constitute Ministers to officiate in holy Things without their Licence. This is that which gives them Power to make, ordain, alter, or change Rites and Customs in religious Worship: Nay, 'tis by this unlimited Prerogative they presume to alter and dispense with the Word of God, to indulge Men in Sin, and to usurp the Authority of God himself, to pardon and forgive Sins committed against God, to bind and to loose whom, when, and for what they please: 'Tis, I say, by this pretended uninterrupted Power, devolv'd down from the Apostles in a direct Line of Succession of Bishops episcopally ordain'd. Wherever therefore this Notion is embrac'd in any Protestant Nation, it is a sad Omen that those who entertain it are greatly degenerated in Principle from the first Protestant Reformers.

Thus having proved our Mission to be valid, and clear'd our selves from the unjust Censures and Calumnies of those who plead the *Roman* Cause; I shall proceed to say somewhat to the remaining Propositions: And lest I should intrude on your Patience too long, I will dispatch these  
with

with the greater Brevity. The second Proposition was,

II. That Ministers may become so negligent, as not to fulfil their Ministry which they have received of the Lord.

In discoursing of this, I purpose,

*First*, To point out to you what 'tis for Ministers to fulfil their Ministry.

*Secondly*, To shew by what Means, or from what Causes, Ministers may come to neglect, and not fulfil their Ministry.

*First*, I am to point out to you what 'tis to fulfil our Ministry. In general I conclude, it is faithfully and diligently to discharge the Duties of our Ministry. There is no Ministry of any kind, but hath its peculiar Duties, to which all are oblig'd who undertake it; and if those Duties are neglected, and not faithfully and diligently attended to, the Ministry is not fulfill'd.

Supposing then that this *Archippus* was a Deacon by Office: To fulfil that Ministry, he ought to consider the Streights and Necessities of the Poor, to sympathize with them in their distressed Circumstances, and chearfully to relieve them; and that without partiality, not relieving some, and neglecting others, but shewing a due Regard to all. He ought, according to the Stock in his Hands, to be prudently liberal and free, not to let the Poor suffer when he hath in his Hands to supply their Wants. To be faithful, he ought to give diligent and constant Attendance on this Work, and faithfully to apply the Church's Treasure to the End propos'd by them, not embezzeling or misapplying the Stock he is intrusted with. This I conceive is fulfilling the Deacon's Ministry.

But



But supposing *Archippus* a Minister or Teacher of the Word; to fulfil this Ministry, he ought to attend to the Duties which this Ministry calls him to; which in part may be seen in these following Particulars.

1. A diligent Endeavour to understand the Word of God, which he is to teach. The great End of the Ministry of God's Word is to explain and expound it. Ministers of the Gospel bring no new Message from Heaven, no new Commandment from Christ. Their Work and Business is to open and unfold the Will of Christ already reveal'd; to lay open to the People what they may be ignorant of, as to their Duty both towards God, and towards one another. This an ignorant Minister can never do. No Man can faithfully fulfil his Ministry, unless he endeavour to understand the Word of God himself.

2. To fulfil this Ministry, Ministers should be laborious and painful, chearfully taking hold of Opportunities to dispense the Word of God. Whatever Knowledge any Minister hath in the Word of God, if he keeps it to himself, nor Church, nor World will be the better for it. A Minister of the Gospel should be *apt to teach*, ready to minister and distribute his heavenly Knowledge, to enrich the Understandings of his People. For this End he should catch hold of every convenient Season; to be *instant in Season, and out of Season*. Whatever Skill any Minister hath to *divide the Word of God*, if he is slothful and negligent, and refuses to break the Bread of Life when Opportunity offers it self, and there is *an open for him Door to preach the Gospel of Christ*, he cannot be said to fulfil his Ministry receiv'd, much less he who preaches not at all, or very rarely. Faithful Ministers must *labour in the Word and Doctrine*, if they will fulfil their Ministry.

3. To

3. To fulfil this Ministry we must study so to accommodate our Sermons, as to Matter and Manner, as may best gain the great End propos'd by our Ministry. We shou'd study that the Matter of our Sermons be not only Truth, but such Truths as best suit with the Circumstances of our People. Every Truth is beautiful in its Season: And Sermons in season, will be as *Apples of Gold in Pictures of Silver.*

Times and Seasons alter People's Circumstances: And all People have their different Seasons according to the Course of divine Providence. Every Season calls for the Exercise of peculiar Graces, and the Discharge of particular Duties proper to that Time and Season. That Minister, therefore, who shall take his Subjects promiscuously as they come, and not of Choice, not regarding the peculiar Circumstance of his Auditors, will in a great measure lose his Labour. A Sermon, however wisely dispos'd, and affectionately deliver'd, on a Subject to minister Comfort to Souls in Adversity, when a People are in the Height of Prosperity, will lose much of its Beauty and Efficacy. On the contrary, a Sermon to commend the Duty of Joy, and Rejoicing in God, when a People are plung'd deeply in Adversity, and are under the Frowns of Providence, will not answer the Pains of the Preacher. But either of these in their Seasons would have been as a refreshing Shower on the Earth in a dry and scorching Time; nothing more welcome.

So when a People are ignorant, as it were, of the first Rudiments of Christianity, and have need to be *fed with Milk, and not with strong Meat*, if a Minister shall study and preach the deep and mysterious Points of Divinity, which is Meat for strong Men, that Man will but starve his People's Souls.

Souls. All the Fruit he can rationally expect, will be a Disappointment of his Hope; for they will not thrive with such Food they are not able to digest.

In like manner, when a People are loose in their Morals, and decay'd in the Life and Power of Godliness; for a Minister to bend his Mind to controversial Subjects, and fill his Discourses with doctrinal and speculative Truths, instead of recommending the true Design of the Christian Religion, *i. e.* Holiness of Life, and Conformity to the Will of God in Love and Peace, is, I think, the way to lose the great End of his Ministry. Nothing at such a time appears more rational than for a Minister of the Gospel to press the Duties of Christianity, and to shew the absolute Necessity of Holiness in order to eternal Happiness.

Again, when Errors, damnable Errors are broach'd, and are spreading their venomous Effluviams, whereby our People are liable to be infected; when the very Air seems to be so impregnated with these infectious Particles, that distant Regions discover the sad Symptoms of the dreadful Contagion; at such a time, for a Minister of the Gospel to be indolent and careless, and only go on in teaching common Truths, at other times very useful, and not to antidote his People's Minds against the Venom of those pestilential and soul-destroying Doctrines, is not to preach so as *to fulfil his Ministry*; for in so doing he will not only hazard his own Reputation, but expose his People to great Danger. I need not tell you, my Brethren, what need there is for all faithful Ministers, who are willing *to fulfil their* Act. xx. 28, *Ministry*, at this day to take heed in this respect, 29, 30. when so many Wolves are gone forth in Sheep's Clothing. The Advice which the Apostle gave

to the Elders and Bishops at *Ephesus*, is, I apprehend, very apposite now ; and the Reason to press it, as cogent now as then. But further,

To fulfil our Ministry, we must look to the Mode or Manner of our Sermons : We are to take heed what Garb or Dress we appear in. I don't mean with respect to the Garments we wear on our Backs ; for it matters not, I conceive, as to our Clothing, what Colour we wear, whether Black or White, Red or Blue ; nor as to Shape, whether long or short : The Gospel does not, I conceive, oblige Ministers to any distinguishing Garments, as the *Levitical* Law did the Priests under the *Mosaic* Dispensation ; but only to Comeliness and Gravity, which the Nature of their Work requires. This I take to be one of those Indifferencies which we are not to make any part of our Religion, unless it be not to give Offence, or to stumble any by it. But by Dress, I mean the Dress of our Sermons, whether plain or gaudy, in an humble or lofty Style ; with the pompous Strain of human Eloquence, and the enticing Words of Man's Wisdom, or with the Plainness and Simplicity of the Gospel, and Demonstration of the Spirit. In this also the Condition and Circumstance of our Auditors is to be consider'd : If a Minister of the Gospel is to preach to a poor illiterate Congregation ; if he comes to his People with a Discourse dress'd with all the Flowers of Rhetorick, and in a pompous Style, or shall use hard Words and scholastick Terms, as unintelligible as *Hebrew* to them ; such a Man will be as sure to lose his Labour, as tho he preach'd in an unknown Tongue. Such a People may be astonish'd at what they don't understand ; they may foolishly admire the Learning of the Preacher ; but wise Men will not commend his Prudence in so doing.

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On the other hand, if the Congregation is compos'd of Persons of better Education, of Men who know the World, and are conversant with Books, who have a Gust, and can taste the Sweet, and relish the Pleasure of polite Language; when the Truth shall be the more pleasing and acceptable for the Dress it wears; or, the Language, like savoury Sauce, shall recommend the spiritual Food, and render it more delightful to nice and squeamish Stomachs; then for a Minister of the Gospel to neglect his Talent of fine Speaking, is to neglect what will recommend him and his Ministry to the Affections of his Auditors: For a clownish, rough, and unpolish'd Style among such Auditors will render his Ministry contemptible, and so consequently ineffectual to gain the great End design'd by it. Tho I must confess, Truth, valuable Truth, appears most beautiful in its own native Plainness, and less suspicious, than when she appears in the Dress of a Harlot, painted and varnish'd; yet seeing she will not be caressed unless she appears in a Dress a-la-mode, we ought to imitate our great Apostle, and study his holy Craft, and *become all Things to all Men, that we may gain some.* I must acknowledge, that 'tis Defect and Deformity that want to be cover'd; and Truth being perfect and beautiful in it self, needs no Varnish; yet we must still remember, that what is beautiful in one's Eye, is not in another's. Therefore, I conceive, we ought in our Ministry to endeavour to render Truth pleasing and acceptable to all; and in so doing, we shall in a good part fulfil our Ministry.

Moreover, Ministers ought to have regard to the Manner of their Delivery. We shou'd take care to deliver the Message of our Lord with a becoming Deportment; not with Levity and

Air, but with Gravity and Solidity, *as becomes the Oracles of God*; not with Fury and Rage, as venting our own Passions, but with Calmness and Serenity of Mind; yet not with Coldness and Indifferency, as tho we cared not whether our Message was received, or not; but with Affection agreeable as the Matter requires, knowing we are speaking for the Glory of God, and the Welfare of never-dying Souls. We should command as for God; warn, reprove, and exhort, as those who firmly believe there will be a Day of reckoning; we should persuade as those, who not only believe, but experimentally *know the Terrors of the Lord*.

(4.) *To fulfil our Ministry*, we are to take special Care to copy our Doctrine in our Conversations: We should transcribe the Duties we teach in our Pulpits in our Lives, and fill up the Duties of our Places and Relations. Ministers of the Gospel should be Examples to their Followers. The Apostle's Charge to *Timothy* is Advice to all Ministers still:

1 Tim. iv. *Be thou an Example to the Believers, in Word, in Conversation, in Charity, in Spirit, in Faith, in Purity.* The great Apostle Paul set himself as a Pat-

1 Cor. xi. *tern to all his Auditors: Be ye, saith he, Followers of me, as I am of Christ.* For Ministers of the Gospel to preach one thing in their Pulpits, and practise the contrary in their Conversations, is to pull down with one Hand what they build with t'other. These act like *Penelope*; unravel by Night what they weave by Day.

Can any Man's Charity be so extensive, as to imagine that that Minister can sincerely and truly believe there is a Heaven for the Holy, and an Hell for the Wicked, which he teaches in his Pulpit, who can deliberately swear, be drunk, and whore himself? No wise Man can so believe. Can any Man persuade himself to believe, that they who are full of Envy, Hatred, Wrath, Variance, Strife, Emulation, and Pride, can be the

the true Ambassadors of the Prince of Peace? 'Tis impossible, sure. For they who promote Vice and Wickedness in their Conversation, can never sincerely press the Practice of the contrary Vertues in the Pulpit. Such Ministers are not only a Scandal to the sacred Function, but a sad Occasion of great Wickedness and Debauchery; for there is hardly any thing more true than that Proverb, *Such Priests, such People*: For, generally speaking, Men are led more by Precedent than by Precept; and 'tis too natural for us all to follow the worst Examples. Ministers of the Gospel shou'd by their exemplary Lives demonstrate, that the Precepts of our most holy Religion may be reduc'd to Practice; that 'tis possible for Men to be pious towards God, just and righteous in dealing, peaceable and charitable towards their Neighbours.

(5.) *To fulfil our Ministry*, we must be constant and persevere therein. To begin well, and not to go on so, will leave us short of *fulfilling our Ministry*. Christians in general, are charged *not to be weary in Well-doing*; much less shou'd the Ministers of Christ be weary in their Calling. The Counsel which aged Paul gave to young Timothy is still worth our regarding, *i. e. Watch thou in all Things, endure Affliction, do the Work of an Evangelist, make full Proof of thy Ministry*. The Object and Reason of our Ministry continuing, we are to continue therein; we shou'd be instant at it. Shall Sinners continue in their Rebellion against God, and be liable to perish, and shall Saints grow weak and languishing; and shall we not continue to endeavour to convert the one, and strengthen and confirm the others, and so glorify God in both? God forbid! *A Dispensation of Grace is committed to us; and woe will be to us, if we desist from the Work of the Lord.* Without  
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Luk. ix. 62. this we cannot fulfil our Ministry; for *they who set their Hands to the Plow, and look back, are not fit for the Kingdom of God.* But

(6.) Lastly, to fulfil this Ministry, Ministers are to be *instant in Prayer* to God for, and in the behalf of their Auditors. 'Tis not enough, that we be diligent and faithful in preparing the Seed, and laborious and constant in sowing it; but we must beg the Divine Direction and Blessing. All the Success of our Ministry entirely depends on God's Blessing. Skilful *Paul may plant*, and wise and eloquent *Apollos may water*; but without God's Blessing, all will be successless: 'Tis *God must give the Increase*. No wise Man can think of labouring in vain; but all our Labours will be in vain, unless God be with us, for *we are Workers together with God*: therefore if we wou'd have Success, we shou'd always endeavour to obtain his Presence and Influence; for without this our Work will not succeed well. Unless God prepare the Seed in our Souls, and make the Ground good and fit to receive it, our Labour as to the Good of Souls will be lost, and we shall have Cause to complain with the Prophet of old, *Who hath believed our Report, and to whom is the Arm of the Lord revealed?* Ministers shou'd be their Peoples Mouth to God, as they are God's Mouth to them: They shou'd not only in publick, but in private wrestle with God for, and in the behalf of their People. They shou'd present their Peoples Grievances and Complaints to the Lord, and shou'd intercede with God for them, as *Moses* did. 'Tis to be presum'd, that Ministers know the State and Circumstances of their Peoples Souls; what Afflictions, what Temptations, what perplexing Doubts and Fears they labour under; consequently, what Grace they need to be supply'd with, that they may not fall, but persevere  
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Isa. liii. 1.



in Well-doing : therefore they shou'd, to fulfil their Ministry, pray heartily for their People, that they may *have Grace to help 'em in their Times of need.* In this we shall follow not only the Example of the great Apostle *Paul*, but the Example of our Blessed Lord himself, who earnestly pray'd for his Disciples, that God wou'd keep 'em from the Evils of this World, and carry on his Work in them to Perfection, that they might be thoroughly sanctify'd.

Remember then, to fulfil our Ministry, we are to study to understand the Word of God ; we must be laborious and painful in it ; we are to take all prudent Care so to accommodate our Discourses as to Matter and Manner, to our Peoples Circumstances, as may best attain the great End design'd, *viz.* their Edification ; we must practise in our Lives what we teach in our Pulpits ; we must persevere in all this : and when we have done this, we must be earnest with God that our Labours may not be *a Savour of Death unto Death* to the Souls of any, *but of Life unto Life* unto all our Hearers ; that the Word of God preach'd by us may be *the Power of God to the Salvation of all :* and if so, then they will be *our Joy and Crown of rejoicing,* in the Presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his Coming.

If we consider this *Archippus* as the Bishop or Pastor of this Church at *Colosse*, besides the Duties mention'd before, which are common to Pastor and Teacher, I might insist on some Duties peculiar to the Bishop's Relation : As, his diligent Watch over his Flock, to defend and secure them against Beasts of Prey ; in his Government, to see that good Discipline be maintain'd among them, that they discharge their Duties one towards another, as well as towards God ; that they live in Love, and *maintain the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond*

*Bond of Peace*; his Care to tender and cherish the Weak and Feeble, to comfort the Disconsolate, to rebuke the Unruly, and reject the contumacious and stubborn Offenders, to loose and receive with tendernefs the truly Penitent. When Bishops and Pastors, who have the Oversight of the People, and to whom the Care of their Souls is committed, shall lie still as idle and careless Shepherds, and let their Flocks be worried by Dogs and Beasts of Prey, and not regard it; or shall suffer any to wander and stray, and not look after them; or shall permit the Strong to push and hurt the Weak, and not mind it; or shall suffer any to grow scabby and diseased, and not endeavour their Cure; or shall be slothful and negligent, and not attend them to provide fresh Waters and green Pastures for them; but shall mind more the fleecing than the feeding their Flocks; such Shepherds don't fulfil the Ministry which they have receiv'd of the Lord.

I suppose I need not spend any of your little time to prove, that there may be such negligent Pastors and Teachers. 'Tis too notorious in common Observation to be denied. I am sorry, that that Saying of the Poet is too true in this Case; *Pudet hac opprobria nobis, & dici potuisse & non potuisse refelli.* There are indeed too many such in the Christian Ministry, it can't be denied. But you'll say, what may be the Reasons thereof? This brings me to the

2d Thing propos'd, viz. To shew you, what may be the Causes why Ministers neglect their Ministry. Many Reasons might be offer'd. I shall suggest a few, and I shall but just mention them, and leave 'em with you to weigh them at your Leisure, for I have not time to enlarge thereon.

(1.) It

(1.) It may be such have either attain'd the End which they at first propos'd, in undertaking the Work of the Ministry; or are wholly disappointed therein. All wise Men, acting rationally, propose an End for which they act, and to obtain their End, contrive Means or Instruments; but when they have either obtain'd their propos'd End, or are so disappointed as to despair of attaining their End by that Means or Instrument; they lay aside or neglect that Means or Instrument for the future. Such Ministers have an End to serve, and if they either gain their End, or are entirely disappointed, they lay aside or neglect their Ministry, which they used only as a Means to obtain their End.

(2.) It may be from too great Love of carnal Ease and Pleasure. The Work of the Ministry, if well minded, is an arduous Work, which calls for all the Powers of the Soul to be engaged in it; and this will not admit carnal Ease, and sinful Pleasure. All Christians in general are to encounter with Difficulties in the Way of their Duty; they must expect great Tryals, and it may be Tribulations in this World; but Ministers in special must look for such Tryals and Exercises, as are altogether inconsistent with worldly Pleasure, and carnal Delights. Instead of indulging themselves in Pleasure, they shou'd think of, and prepare to *endure Hardness, as good Soldiers of Jesus Christ*; for Christians are Soldiers, and Ministers are Commanders; they are all in the Field, and the Enemies are near, yea all round them; they must be on the Guard continually, and this will be too fatiguing for those who give themselves to the Pleasure and Delights of the Flesh. The Pleasure of the Mind, pure spiritual Pleasure, is that which shou'd delight Men whose chief Business is Contemplation; but this is too

refin'd for Men devoted to the Pleasures of Sense, and therefore they grow weary of, and neglect that Business which is inconsistent with the Pleasures of Sense, which they are so fond of that they cannot leave them. 'Tis no wonder, if such *Demas's* do forsake not only the Ministry, but their Christianity also; for they cannot brook taking up the Cross for the sake of the Gospel: They are so well pleased with the Delights of the World, that they can't expose themselves, or run any hazard for the sake of Christ.

(3.) It may be from some particular Discouragements they meet with in the way of their Duty.

1<sup>st</sup>, They may be discourag'd from the little Success they have had in their Ministry; and this is not the least, tho' 'tis one of the common Discouragements Ministers meet with in their Work. They know, that the Design of their Ministry is to reclaim Sinners, and to reform and establish Believers: But they see so little Success of this kind attend their Ministry, that their Hands are weaken'd in the Lord's Work. They see their Ministry so barren and unfruitful; so few are converted by the Word, and Professors under their Ministry so very ignorant, carnal, worldly, proud, envious, sensual, covetous, and contentious, that they have Cause to cry out with the Prophet of old, *We have stretch'd out our Hands all the Day to a stubborn and gainsaying People. Oh! Who hath believed our Report, and to whom is the Arm of the Lord reveal'd?* This makes 'em weary, and ready to give over, and almost to resolve not to open their Lips to speak in the Name of the Lord any more, or at least to become very indifferent whether they do or not; not considering, that their Reward don't depend on the happy Success they wish for; for they will  
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be unto God a sweet Savour of Christ in them who perish, as well as in them who are saved by their Ministry. For if they are faithful, the Word by their Lips, tho it be a Savour of Death unto Death, shall not lose its Reward. But yet, the Want of desir'd Success I must own is a real and great Discouragement, and very much weakens the Hands of faithful Ministers, so as that they don't fulfil their Ministry as they shou'd, or as they desire to do.

2dly, They may be discouraged from the Sights, Ingratitude, and Wickedness of those to whom they minister, slighting their Ministry, making ungrateful Returns to them for their faithful Labours, reproaching their Labours, opposing their faithful Endeavours to reform them, contemning their just Authority, encouraging Offenders, preventing their just Prosecution, screening them from Justice, thereby defiling their Communion, rendring their Reproofs, and all Church-Discipline ineffectual to reclaim those who walk disorderly. When Pastors and Ministers are thus treated, 'tis no wonder to hear that they are tempted to neglect their Duties, and so do not fulfil their Ministry.

3dly, They may be discouraged from the mean Circumstances they are under in the World, and the little Care their People take of them to provide for them, what is honourable in the Sight of God and Man. Tho 'tis the Will of God, that they who preach the Gospel shou'd live of the Gospel, and that they who partake of Ministers Spirituals shou'd conscientiously make a Return to them of their Temporals; tho no Duty in the Gospel is more clear, rational, equitable, and just than this; yet many pious, faithful Ministers, thro the Unkindness or Covetousness of their People, groan under this Burden, and are forced to make an ungrate-

ful Choice, either to neglect a Moral Duty, in not taking care to provide for their Families, or else to involve themselves in the Cares of the World, and so neglect their Ministry. I speak not of those Ministers who preach only occasionally, whose Circumstances in the World are so happy, that they can allow themselves time to study the Word of God without any Injury to their Families; their Ministry may be useful, and they sin not, if they dispense the Word of God freely, without being burdensome; for, generally speaking, in our Days, as well as heretofore, the People love free Grace, and free Gospel. But I mean in this, those Ministers and Pastors who are fix'd, whose stated and daily Work is to attend the Ministry, and who have no other way to provide for themselves and theirs, but entirely depend on the Altar; whose whole Time must be taken up in providing Bread for their Peoples Souls, except what must necessarily be subtracted for visiting the Sick, comforting the Afflicted and Disconsolate, and answering the Doubts of the Weak and truly Scrupulous; that such as these who give themselves wholly to the Work of the Ministry, shou'd be ungratefully neglected, and be suffer'd to want Conveniencies, not to say Necessaries too, for the comfortable Support of themselves and Families in the Eyes of the World, must be very discouraging; when, at the same time, they shall see those to whom they minister, and for whose Sakes they sequester'd themselves from all worldly Affairs, to live in Pleasure and Ease, and to have not only for Necessity, but for Conveniency and Delight. It must be an insupportable Burden, which very much tends to weaken their Hands, when they shall know with what Coldness and Reluctancy many communicate their Pence toward the Ministry, who at the  
same

same time profusely lavish Pounds for Luxury, and carnal Delights.

Some think, that if their Ministers have just from Hand to Mouth, Bread and Clothes for the Day, that's enough; they must live on Divine Providence for Futurity, and be content; not considering, at the same time, what a dark and melancholy Thought it will necessarily and unavoidably suggest to them, to foresee, that if by Providence they are taken away from their Families, their sorrowful Widows, and helpless Orphans, must entirely depend on the cold, and almost frozen Charity of the Parishes to which they belong, for their future Subsistence: And this melancholy Thought will be the more afflicting, when they shall reflect on the Callings, which, perhaps, they have quitted for the sake of the Ministry; which, with the same Diligence they now use in their Spiritual Calling, and by the Blessing of God, wou'd have afforded them wherewith to have lived in as great Splendor, and to make as comfortable Provision for the Happiness of their Families after their Decease, as any of their People. Now, I say, when faithful Ministers shall find themselves and theirs thus ungratefully, and unjustly slighted and neglected, and shall see themselves expos'd to the Scorn and Contempt of the World, because of their Poverty; and that they can't without neglecting a moral Duty, with any Satisfaction go on any longer in the Work of the Ministry, which they have now made a Tryal of; 'tis no wonder they are tempted to neglect their Ministry, by involving themselves in the Affairs of the World, which are very inconsistent with it. They who are Christian Soldiers, especially Commanders, the Apostle advises *not to be entangled with the Affairs of this Life.*

But

*A Vindication of the*

But some may say, yea, I know it has been said, that the Apostle *Paul* did work and preach too, and so should Ministers now. To this I answer,

*First*, If Ministers now had such Measures of the infallible Spirit as the Apostle *Paul* had, and cou'd speak with Tongues, and deliver the Will of God without Study or Premeditation; the Objection wou'd have some Weight. But 'tis now otherwise with ordinary Ministers. They are to study the Word, and to meditate thereon, that they may be *Workmen who need not be asham'd, rightly dividing the Word of Truth*: And this they can't do without Time.

*Secondly*, This is contrary to the stated Laws  
 1 Cor. ix. and Rules of our Lord Jesus Christ. *Christ bath*  
 11, 12, 13, *ordain'd, that they who preach the Gospel shall live*  
 14. *of the Gospel: and they who attend the Altar, shou'd*  
*be Partakers with the Altar.* They who sow Spi-  
 Gal. vi. 6. *rituals shou'd reap Temporals. He that is taught*  
*in the Word, is commanded to communicate to him*  
*who teacheth, in all good Things.* And 'tis not only  
 contrary to the Law and Rule of Christ, but con-  
 1 Cor. ix. *trary to Reason and Justice; for who goeth a War-*  
 7. *fare at any time at his own Charges? Who plant-*  
*eth a Vineyard, and eateth not of the Fruit there-*  
*of? Who feedeth a Flock, and eateth not of the*  
*Milk of the Flock?* Every Man, one wou'd think  
 shou'd see it reasonable, that they who are em-  
 ploy'd for the Good of others, shou'd be support-  
 ed in the Discharge of their Duty by those, for  
 whose Welfare they are employ'd. But,

*Thirdly*, The Apostle's Practice in working and preaching is not an obligatory Precedent on Ministers so to do now; it only shews the Lawfulness of so doing in case of necessity for the Advantage of the Gospel: For the Apostle several  
 reflect



reflects on those who laid him under that Necessity, and withal tells them, that *he robbed other Churches, taking Wages of them, whilst he served them freely*. Now, if it had been simply unlawful to receive Wages for Preaching, to be sure the Apostle wou'd not have receiv'd any; and his receiving of some Wages, shews that Working and Preaching was not his constant Practice; and his severely reflecting on those who forced him so to do, shews that it was Necessity for the Gospel's Sake that made him so do, and not Duty and Choice: So that we see 'tis Necessity arising from the Covetousness of the People, that is to be pleaded to prove such a Practice. Besides base Covetousness, I conceive, this rigid and severe Principle may arise from the low and mean Thoughts such Men entertain of the Gospel-Ministry, as if it was a Thing or Work of so little Concern, it was no great Matter how, and after what manner 'twas done; nor how little Skill they have to manage it, who are to be concern'd in it. These Persons Thoughts are far different from what the Apostle entertain'd of this great Work, when he said, *Who is sufficient for these* 2 Cor. ii. *Things?* I am sure, they who have a just Sense of<sup>16</sup> the Greatness of the Work, and who endeavour conscientiously to discharge it honourably, for the Glory of God, and Good of Souls, groan under it, as feeling their Strength with all their Time and Helps, an unequal Match for it. Good God! what an insupportable Burden then must it be to those, who labour in the Ministry under these *Egyptian* Task-Masters? Who are compelled to make their Tale of Bricks, and find themselves Straw too! Sure, nothing but infinite Supports from God, and invincible Courage and Zeal, can carry such unhappy Ministers thro such Discouragements as these. Instead of wondering, that  
these

these don't fulfil their Ministry, we have Reason to stand astonish'd, that they don't faint in their Minds. No Words can express the Burden of their Souls; their Words are as *Job's*, swallow'd up: And they express by Sighs and Groans what they are asham'd, or Experience tells 'em 'tis in vain to utter.

Thus I have hinted at some of those Reasons which may make Ministers to neglect their Ministry. I come now to the last Proposition: Which is

III. That when a Minister or Pastor is become negligent in the Work of the Ministry, the faithful People, whom he serves, shou'd warn and admonish him to take heed to his Ministry, and fulfil it. *Say to Archippus, &c.* 'Tis not the Work of particular Persons, you see, but the Duty of the Church. 'Tis not the Work of every prating Malepert to take upon him to reprove the Elders or Ministers, as is too common with some; nor is it altogether, and alone the Duty of their Brethren in the Ministry: tho they, as Brethren, are oblig'd in Duty and Affection to shew to one another their Failings, and to warn and admonish one another in the Lord; yet, I conceive, here it is the Duty of the Church or Faithful in Christ, and not the Duty of Ministers alone. But for Order-sake, the Body of Faithful in Christ may chuse one or more of their Number either in Office, or not, to be their Mouth to deliver their Admonition, and to lay before him the Reasons of their Procedure, together with the End they design'd by it. I need not suggest, that this ought to be done with the Manifestation of the highest Concern for the Glory of God, and of the sincerest Affection to their Minister, and all to be done in the most solemn and

and awful manner possible, as the Nature of the Case requires. I shall therefore leave this, and suggest some few Reasons, why the Church and Faithful in Christ shou'd thus do. Because,

1. In Ministers fulfilling their Ministry, the Glory of God is much concern'd. There is nothing any Christian People shou'd be more jealous of, or more zealous for, than God's Glory: Nor is there any one thing in the World, in which the Glory of God is more concern'd, than in a Minister's faithfully fulfilling his Ministry.

2. Because the Welfare, the Eternal Welfare, of immortal Souls, in a great measure depends thereon; not only the Welfare of the Souls of the Wicked, but of the Souls of the Faithful themselves. They, surely, who are so nearly concern'd, and that in their most important Affair, shou'd methinks see it their Duty, seeing 'tis so much their Interest so to do.

3. To clear themselves from the Imputation of his Sin, who neglect to fulfil his Ministry. We are charged *not to partake with others in their Sin*; Eph. v. 7. and this is one way, whereby we may partake of others Sins, when we neglect to do our Duty towards them, which might prevent their Sin. As in *Ezekiel's* Prophecy, if the Watchman did *Ezek. iii.* not warn, and the Sinner went on in Sin, and *17. &c.* died therein, his Blood was imputable to the Watchman; so, if a Minister neglect his Ministry, and the Faithful in Christ don't warn him, the Consequences of his Neglect, how bad soever they be, will be imputable to them; and as they share with him in the Guilt, they may expect to share in his Punishment.

4. Because the faithful Discharge of this Duty may recover the Man to his former Fervour and Zeal in his Ministerial Work. By this means the Church may come to the knowledge of the true

Cause, and so by removing the Stumbling-Block the Man may go on again chearfully in his Duty; or they may so convince the Man of his Sin in neglecting his Ministry, that he may be asham'd of it, and for the future double his Diligence, and faithfully discharge his Duty. As this is a Means ordain'd of God for such an End, we are to do our Duty therein, and leave the Success to him. But yet there is ground to hope for the desir'd Success, when a People shew so much Love to their Minister, as thus faithfully and friendly to endeavour to reclaim him from that Course, which will be ruinous to him in the end without Reformation.

5. Becapse hereby a People will make one of the greatest Discoveries of their Love to God, and Zeal for his Cause, in that they will not suffer Sin, no not in their Rulers or Ministers, but will appear against it. The greatest Manifestation of our Love to God, and Zeal for his Interest, is our Hatred of Sin; and the greater our Hatred against Sin is, the greater Demonstration we give of our Love to God. The more dear the Persons be to us, or the greater and more elevated they are in Place, Honour, and Esteem, against whom we appear for their Sin; the more is our Hatred of Sin, our Love to God, and Zeal for Religion manifested. Thus a Church will manifest their Love to God, and Zeal for his Interest, when they will not indulge Sin, no not in their Minister; but will reprove him for his Neglects, and admonish him for the future to amend. But,

6. Lastly, Because a lukewarm Ministry will certainly draw on a People the Displeasure of God. If that Proverb is true, That *such Priests, such People*; then a lukewarm Ministry will render a People lukewarm too; and a lukewarm People will



will become so hateful to the Lord, that, in a little time, without a Reformation, *Their Candlestick will be removed, and they spewed out of God's Mouth.*

I am now come to the Application, and you may think 'tis time so to do. But, I hope, the Uncommonness of the Subject may atone for the Prolixity of this Discourse; I beg your Patience for a few Minutes more, and I will conclude.

From the first Doctrine we infer,

*First,* If the Churches of Christians have, as we have proved they have, a right to chuse their own Ministers; then the Mission of Ministers in Protestant Churches is a good and valid Mission, and all their regular Administrations are valid. Consequently, there can be no danger for Persons to sit under their Ministry, or to attend on their Administrations, according to the Rule of Christ, whatever the Papists or Parsons popishly affected say to the contrary.

*Secondly,* Hence we see, that 'tis a great Imposition on the Churches, for any who pretend to uninterrupted Succession of Episcopal Authority from the Apostles, to call and send Ministers without the previous Knowledge and Consent of the Christian People, over whom such Ministers are placed: When we see, that this uninterrupted Succession of Episcopal Authority is only a Chimera, or a mere *Romish* Trick and Juggle; a Trick, whereby the *Romish* Priests keep the People in awe, and render them entirely devoted to their Interest, as tho Eternal Salvation or Damnation were in their hands alone, and that they, as those of old, had alone the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven at their Girdles, and that 'twas in their Power alone to let in, and shut out whom they please, and the People has no Remedy; for

whom they pretend to bind, 'tis not in the power of any under God to loose, without Licence from them.

*Thirdly*, Hence we see, what an abominable Sin the *Romanists* are guilty of, who usurp this Authority, which belongs to the Church and Faithful in Christ, who will impose on the Churches Ministers without their Suffrage or Consent. If the Apostles themselves wou'd not presume to act thus, but in calling and setting apart Ministers for the Churches, acted by and with the Consent and Suffrage of the Churches; what Presumption must it be in their pretended Successors now to impose on the People Officers and Ministers, without their previous Knowledge and Consent? Thus to rob the Churches of this their undoubted Right, is to be sure the worst Sacrilege Men can be guilty of: Nor will that mock Shew of asking the Peoples Consent, when they are not there, nor the Pretence of their subsequent Consent, acquit them of this heinous Crime.

*Fourthly*, Hence we see, what great Cause the Protestant Churches have to continue to bless the Lord for the Glorious Reformation. By the Reformation they were freed in a good measure from this Piece of Popery, and the Tyranny thereof. They have great Cause to magnify the Goodness of God herein, that they are by the Reformation freed from that Bondage, which was worse than that in *Egypt*.

*Fifthly*, This shou'd warn all Protestant Churches against the Incroachments of their Clergy: For if proud, ambitious, and covetous Priests once imagine themselves possess'd of a Power independent of any Power under Heaven, and uncontrollable by any Power on Earth; they will not only domineer and lord it over their Fellow-Creatures, but in a little time they will ascend  
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and seat themselves in God's Throne. They will *fit in the Temple of God as God*; and pretend to give Laws not only to Subjects, but to the greatest Potentates on Earth: They will quickly *exalt* 2 Theff. 2. *themselves above all that is called God*. If you shou'd 3, 4. think this Suggestion too harsh, I will remind you that what hath been, may be; and from the same Principles and Causes, we may rationally expect the same Effects, if not prevented. May all the Protestant Churches thence take warning, and not suffer themselves to be impos'd on by their Clergy: for if they neglect their Duty in this respect, and provoke God judicially to permit them to fall again under a tyrannical Priesthood; if they slide again into the very Dregs of Popery, they may not expect that God will work Wonders to bring about another Reformation. I heartily wish, that before any Churches try this fatal Experiment, they would look over into Popish Countries, and see how intolerably this Yoke galls the Necks of the Laity. May they remember that the Tyranny of the Priesthood was a Yoke that our Fathers were not able to bear!

*Sixthly, and Lastly,* Let us, my Brethren, who are in the Ministry, take heed of Usurpation: Let us be content with that Honour and Authority which God and our Churches have allotted us. Let us think it Honour enough to be Servants to the Saints and Faithful in Christ, and not aspire after Domination. Let us *not lord it over God's Heritage*. O let us from our very Souls abhor all Popish Usurpations: Let us endeavour to be faithful Guides to our People, and *Helpers on of their Joy*; but not tyrannical Imposers on their Faith and Consciences. May we always glory in, and chearfully submit unto that Authority which our Blessed Lord and King hath lodg'd in his Church.

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From the *Second Doctrine* we may infer,

*First*, That there is great Necessity for all Ministers of the Gospel to *watch and pray that they enter not into Temptation*. The Advice which our Blessed Lord gave his Disciples, *watch and pray, &c.* was not only necessary for the Laity, but for the Clergy too: for if Ministers are attended with the same Corruptions, are liable to the same Temptations, and surrounded with the same Snares in the World, as other Christians are; then they sure are oblig'd to the same Duties as Means to prevent their falling. If no more depended on Ministers walking, than on the walking of other Christians, 'tis necessary that they should use the same Precaution. But there is infinitely more Good or Hurt depending on their regular or irregular Conversation. Therefore Ministers had need in a special manner to take heed to themselves, lest instead of faithfully fulfilling their Ministry, they be detrimental to the Interest of Christ, which they are design'd to advance.

*Secondly*, Let us all resolve, by the Help of Divine Grace, not to neglect our Ministry which we have received of the Lord. Let us look on our selves indispensably oblig'd for the future, both in Duty and Interest, to fulfil our Ministry. The Duty we owe to God, and the Love we bear to the Souls of Men, should make us diligent in this our spiritual Calling. Let us consider, that 'twill be the greatest Affront to our Lord and Master Christ Jesus, and the most ingrateful Return we can make him for the Honour he hath done us in putting us into the Ministry, to neglect to fulfil it. The Honour of God, the Advancement of the Kingdom and Interest of our dear Redeemer, in the common and ordinary way, depends on Ministers fulfilling their Ministry.

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The Welfare, yea, the eternal Welfare of precious and immortal Souls, in a great measure, rests on Ministers faithfully fulfilling their Ministry. But if these Considerations will not strengthen our Resolutions, and quicken us to our Duty, let us remember that a Day of reckoning will come: We are *Stewards of the Mysteries of God, and it becomes Stewards to be faithful*; for their God will call them to an Account. O, my Brethren! let us labour to improve our Talents so well, that we may give up our Accounts with Joy, and not with Shame and Grief; that the Lord may say to us, *Well done, good and faithful Servants, enter into the Joy of your Lord.*

*Thirdly*, Hence we see what good Reason there is for all Churches and Congregations of Christians to strengthen the Hands of their faithful Ministers, and to encourage them in their Work. This they will do by a diligent Attendance on, and a faithful Improvement of their Ministry; by a conscientious, free, and liberal Contribution to enable them to go on in their Work chearfully, without worldly Incumbrances; by praying heartily for them; for if the Apostles needed, and therefore desired the Prayers of the Churches, saying, *Brethren, pray for us*, much more do Ministers need their People's Prayers now. This is not only the People's Duty, but their Interest; for they will receive the Benefit thereof in the issue, for their Prayers will *return into their own Bosoms*, as might be demonstrated in many Particulars. But that will be too long.

*Fourthly*, Hence we learn one great Cause of the Degeneracy of the Age in which we live. 'Tis plain that *Iniquity abounds, and the Love of many waxes cold*: And to what shall we attribute this abounding of Iniquity? May it not be Ministers not fulfilling their Ministry? 'Tis no wonder to see

see Men profane, and to neglect the Duties of Religion, nay to scoff at and ridicule Religion it self, when they see the Ministers do the same thing with them. 'Tis natural for Men to practise, especially in Vice, as they see their Leaders and Guides practise. The Pride, Avarice, and Profaneness of the *Romish* Priesthood, was; in a great measure, the Cause of the Degeneracy of that Church: And may we not look nearer home, and with grief behold Atheism, Deism, Libertinism, and all Profaneness abounding? To what Cause shall we attribute this, but to the loose and irregular Conversations of those Ministers who take no care to fulfil their Ministry? We pray for a Reformation of Manners; but all Prayers will be in vain, humanly speaking, unless Ministers reform their own Lives by the same Rules which they prescribe to others. When Ministers of the Gospel preach and practise well, and set good Examples to their People, then we may hope for a blessed Reformation; and not till then, unless God work Miracles, which we have no reason to expect in this Case. **12 MR 58**

*Fifthly*, If so, this shews what Necessity there is for the Churches of Christ to exercise that wholesome and useful Discipline that is necessary not only towards their Members in general, but towards all negligent and scandalous Ministers in particular. To reprove, exhort, and censure loose and incorrigible Members, is very necessary and commendable, much more to censure negligent, loose, swearing, drunken, and debauch'd Ministers; who are not only a Scandal to the sacred Function, but a Reproach to that holy Religion they pretend to be Ministers of. As Motives to press this, the Reasons before mentioned shall suffice. Let all Churches then remember that 'tis not only their Duty, but Interest, to say to their *Archippus's*, *Take heed, &c.*